

# Pair of injuries helped instill importance of perseverance for rising New Jersey attorney



By Brian Cox

Attorney Samantha (Sam) Holleritter tends to think ahead of the game. She likes having a plan, anticipating how it might change, and then foreseeing where to go with a new plan.

As a litigator, however, she says she's learned that there's a lot of truth in the old adage about best laid plans.

"In litigation, every day is different," she says, "which I think is helpful for my personality. It's taught me more patience and how to go with the flow and how to switch gears quickly while still taking time to think about strategy."



**Sam and her husband, Kevin, named their Goldendoodle Sevin after a running joke in "Seinfeld."**

Holleritter says she first learned how plans can go awry years ago when she was playing lacrosse in high school and tore her ACL – twice. She had to undergo two major knee surgeries, each requiring nearly nine months of recovery time.

"It definitely taught me perseverance and how to come back from setbacks," she says.

A New Jersey native, Holleritter grew up near Lake Hopatcong as the oldest of three children in a close-knit family. She describes herself as the "classic Type A first child." While many teenagers may struggle to decide what they want to do after graduation, Holleritter had already mapped out her future.

By her freshman year of high school, she knew she wanted to become a lawyer.

"I was going to college to play lacrosse, and then I was going to law school to be a lawyer," she says. "That was kind of my path."

Athletics occupied much of her youth. She played soccer, basketball, and lacrosse, eventually continuing her lacrosse career at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, N.J. At the same time, she immersed herself in academics and extracurricular activities, embracing the busy schedule that suited her personality.

The ACL injuries could easily have derailed her plans. Instead, they reinforced the persistence and discipline that would later become hallmarks of her legal career. Long recoveries taught her how to handle adversity and to focus on long-term goals rather than short-term frustrations.

Those qualities proved valuable when she entered New York Law School. Seeking to minimize debt, she commuted from northern New Jersey and lived with her aunt during the week. The arrangement fit her practical nature and allowed her to focus on her studies while remaining close to family.

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**Sam played lacrosse throughout high school and as a Devil at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, N.J.**

Then came another disruption no one could have planned for at the time.

During her second year of law school, the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly shut down New York City. One morning, as she was preparing to catch the train to class, she received an email announcing that classes had been canceled because of a reported case of COVID.

“We just never went back that semester,” she recalls.

Like countless law students across the country, Holleritter suddenly found herself learning remotely. Yet she adapted quickly. Along with two classmates, she created a virtual study group that remained connected throughout the day, recreating the collaborative environment they would have enjoyed in the library. The routine helped maintain both productivity and normalcy during an uncertain time.

Holleritter was named a Pro Bono Scholar, served as vice chair of Moot Court, and was a member of the Dean’s Leadership Council.

The pandemic also altered some of her professional plans. A summer associate position was shortened, and the legal job market became far less predictable.

Although she entered law school believing she would pursue transactional work, her experiences gradually steered her toward litigation. After graduation, Holleritter clerked for Judge Noah Franzblau in the Superior Court of New Jersey, Morris County.

The clerkship became one of the most influential experiences of her career.

Working with Judge Franzblau allowed her to observe multiple divisions of the court system, from special civil matters to general civil litigation and criminal proceedings. More importantly, it gave her a judge’s-eye view of the legal profession.

“I got to see how judges judge lawyers,” she says.

Judge Franzblau remains an important mentor, providing both professional guidance and personal support as her career has progressed.

Yet another unexpected change arrived near the end of her clerkship. The firm where she had expected to begin her post-clerkship career was unable to extend an offer because of the economic uncertainty created by the pandemic. Once again, Holleritter’s plan had to change.

Instead of dwelling on the setback, Holleritter secured a position with another large New Jersey firm, where she spent more than two years developing as a litigation associate. The experience exposed her to significant cases, demanding workloads, and the realities of large-firm practice.

She welcomed the challenge.

“I knew they were the ‘grinding’ years,” she says. “I wanted to learn all I could.”

Still, as the firm continued to grow, Holleritter found herself missing the close-knit environment that had attracted her to smaller academic settings like she’d found at Fairleigh Dickinson. She valued mentorship, personal connections, and the opportunity to be recognized for her contributions.

That realization ultimately led her to Mandelbaum Barrett PC, where she joined the firm’s litigation practice group in January 2025.

The move has provided the balance she was seeking – Mandelbaum Barrett is a growing firm and is in the top 10 largest firms in the state, still providing the large-firm experience while embracing a close-knit environment.

At Mandelbaum Barrett, she handles a broad range of litigation matters, including commercial disputes, employment matters, hospitality-related issues, and shareholder conflicts. The variety appeals to her intellectual curiosity and desire to keep learning.

She particularly enjoys working on matters that connect directly to everyday experiences such as employment and hospitality law.

“We all work. We all stay in hotels,” she says. “It’s interesting to see the back end of those industries.”

The firm’s collaborative culture has also made an impression. Holleritter credits mentor Melody Block and other colleagues with helping her continue developing both professionally and personally. Through Primerus, she has expanded her professional network and become involved with the Women Lawyers and Young Lawyers Sections.

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Outside the office, Holleritter remains as active as ever.

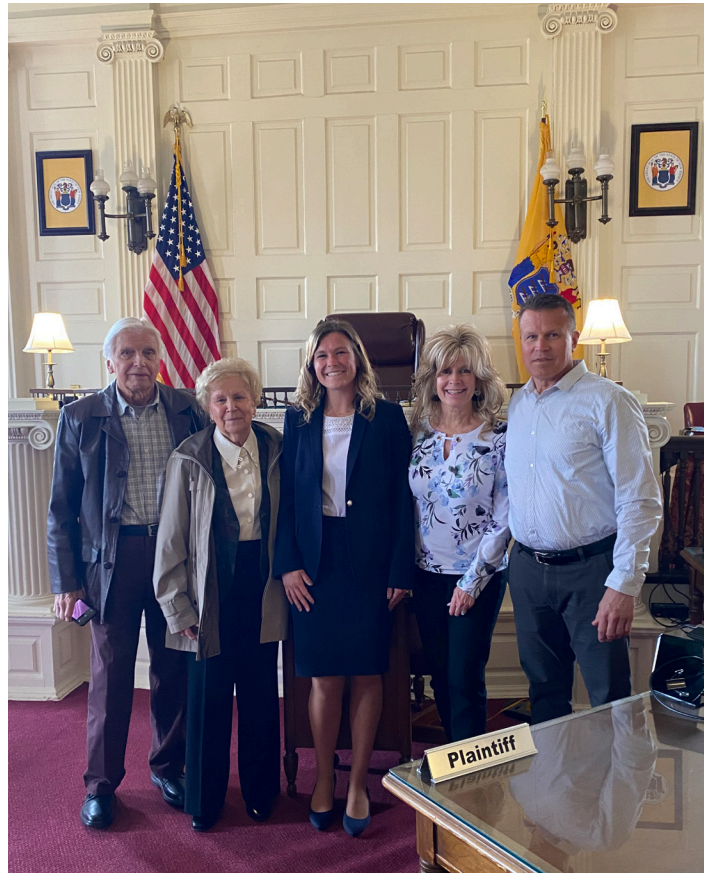
She and her husband, Kevin, whom she met while both were playing lacrosse at Fairleigh Dickinson, married in 2024 after becoming engaged in Ireland. Together they spent much of their first year of marriage renovating their home, a project that undoubtedly appealed to her love of planning. They also welcomed a Goldendoodle named Sevin – named after a running joke inspired by “Seinfeld” and cleverly spelled using a combination of their names.

She continues to pursue fitness with the same intensity that characterized her athletic career, running, participating in CrossFit workouts alongside her father, and finding time for long walks with Sevin.

Her family remains a significant influence. She credits her mother’s adaptability and her father’s steady, decades-long career with helping shape her outlook on life and work. She brings those influences together in a practice that supports a diverse clientele including individuals, small businesses, large corporations, and public entities in a wide range of complex litigation matters.

“My practice requires me to learn different law and really stay up to date on different things,” she says. “I like the versatility of my practice, and I hope my willingness to take on more cases and learn new things allows me to serve more clients in the future.”

That’s the plan.



Sam celebrated her swearing-in as an attorney with her paternal grandparents, (left) Christopher and Joan Holleritter, and her parents, Denise and Christopher II.