

MOVER OF THE WEEK

DeRousse Aims To Enforce Deals As New Partner At Stahl Cowen

By Jacqueline Palank

Just call Shelly A. DeRousse the enforcer. Though she doesn't fight crimes and catch the bad guys in action-packed movies, bankruptcy attorney DeRousse nevertheless finds a thrill in making sure contracts and deals are upheld.

"Rather than being the one who drafts the argument, I like being the person who enforces them," said DeRousse, who recently joined Chicago law firm Stahl Cowen Crowley Addis as a partner.

For example, DeRousse said she likes to go after a debtor that's defaulted on its loan versus draw up the complex loan documents in the first place.

"If you can be the one who gets a secured lender's money back, it's a great situation for everybody," she said.

DeRousse said while studying at DePaul University's law school, she realized her loves of litigation and deal-making could be combined in bankruptcy. Upon graduating in 2001, she went to work for Sidley Austin LLP in Chicago, where she said she was "always getting my foot in litigation whenever I could."

DeRousse said a desire to "grow roots" and control her own business development led her to Stahl Cowen, where she started as partner Sept. 2.

"It was obviously a good move for me in that sense that Stahl Cowen isn't a big firm, and I wasn't necessarily looking for a big firm," she said. "There are a lot of attorneys here like me who have worked in other large firms and represented sophisticated clients and, in a lot of cases, have been able to bring those clients with them."

DeRousse said she looks forward to expanding her practice beyond that of traditional debtor work, including taking on more bankruptcy-related litigation as well as representing creditors.

The Windy City native enjoys practicing bankruptcy law in Chicago, which has a bankruptcy court and is home to many companies that could someday become clients. DeRousse said she also likes the sense of community.

"I have friends all over the city and a lot of them are practicing bankruptcy law, and it's fun," DeRousse said. "We have war stories; we have a common bond."

DeRousse spends much of her free time with her family and running a support group for parents of children with life-threatening food allergies. DeRousse's 4-year-old daughter is allergic to products containing egg, dairy, wheat, gluten and mangos, while her 2-year-old daughter is allergic to soy and orange products.

DeRousse said the lack of resources that were available to help her and her husband inspired them to help others in similar situations.

"We had to learn how to live our lives...juggling careers and toddlers," DeRousse said. "Once we figured it out, it just became a natural thing to want to help other parents do the same thing."

Balancing everything requires one small sacrifice, however.

"I don't watch TV," she said. "As much as I love TV... there's no time for it. Every minute of my day is accounted for." *DBR*

NETWORKING

A selected listing of recent appointments and announcements in U.S. bankruptcy law practice, compiled by Dow Jones' Daily Bankruptcy Review Small-Cap staff.

Dan Clay has been named chief operating officer of Sammy's Woodfired Pizza. Most recently, Clay served as the president of Houlihan's Restaurants in Leawood, Kansas, putting him in charge of more than 100 restaurants. He also helped to reorganize Cooker Restaurant Corp. and led the company out of Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

Bruce E. de'Medici has been tapped to serve as a partner in SmithAmudsen LLC's bankruptcy and creditors' rights practice group. Previously, de'Medici was of counsel at Mendell Menkes & Surdyk. He has represented debtors, trustees, secured creditors, vendors and other constituents in Chapter 11 bankruptcies and has more than 20 years of experience. De'Medici received his law degree from Wayne State University and his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan.

Daniel Wiggins has joined MorrisAnderson & Associates Ltd.'s St. Louis office. The new consulting manager has assisted companies, banks and equity investors on issues with insolvency proceedings, out-of-court restructurings and divestitures and acquisitions. He has also worked with private equity groups and advised an automotive parts supplier during its Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Wiggins is a member of the Turnaround Management Association.

Daily Bankruptcy Review Small-Cap's NETWORKING column welcomes news releases from those working in the corporate bankruptcy industry. The column will appear each Friday. Items for NETWORKING may be faxed to 202-862-8873.