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REGIONAL NEWS

Ex-Rawle & Henderson Employment Chair Joins Delco Firm

BY ZACK NEEDLES

Of the Legal Staff

As 2010 wound down, the trend of big firm lawyers jumping ship for smaller shops with lower cost structures continued.

On Monday, Media, Pa.-based defense firm Nicolson Associates announced that Madeline S. Baio, former chair of Rawle & Henderson's employment law department and head of the firm's pharmaceutical practice, officially came aboard in November.

Cheryl M. Nicolson, founder and managing partner of the firm, said the addition of Baio, who worked in Rawle & Henderson's Philadelphia office, has complemented Nicolson Associates' existing practices as well as added some unique components.

Both Baio and the firm represent Fortune 500 and Global 500 manufacturers in products liability cases, according to Nicolson. The firm also represents clients in retail liability cases.

But Baio brings with her an employment law practice and an expertise in representing pharmaceutical companies that are new to the firm. "She represents a major national pharmaceutical chain with regard to premises liability and employment law," Nicolson said, adding that she felt bringing on that added practice depth was a "tremendous move."

Nicolson said the firm's new employment law capability has opened doors to business it would have had to refer out in the past.

According to Nicolson, Baio not only brought a significant book of business with her from Rawle & Henderson but has been "tremendously effective" in attracting new clients since joining the firm.

Rawle & Henderson's executive committee members — Timothy J. Abeel, Thomas A. Kuzmick and John H. McCarthy — could not be reached at press time.

Nicolson also said she hopes those companies Baio represents in employment matters will begin coming to the firm for general liability work as well and vice versa.

Baio said she and Nicolson have known each



BAIO

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"You don't have the big firm overhead and that makes it easier to better service clients who today are very cost-conscious," she said.

Nicolson Associates' other selling point for Baio was the fact that it's owned and operated by women.

Nicolson Associates' other selling point for Madeline S. Baio was the fact that it's owned and operated by women.

"As corporate counsel are paying much more attention to minority law firms, this was a very exciting opportunity," she said.

Nicolson agreed that now is a good time to be a minority- or women-owned firm as companies continue to strive to fulfill diversity requirements, adding that a major coup for the firm was its recent induction into the National Association of Minority & Women Owned Law Firms.

"That opens up tremendous doors for us with regard to the other companies in that

organization," she said, adding that being associated with NAMWOLF also serves as a sign to prospective clients that the firm has been vetted.

Moving forward, Nicolson said, the firm has its sights set on growth.

In addition to expanding its employment law capabilities, Nicolson said the firm will also focus on representing more self-insured Fortune 500 and Global 500 manufacturing companies.

Nicolson said the firm is already in talks to hire another new attorney soon and hopes to eventually open an office in the Midwest, though she declined to specifically name a location.

But despite the desire to add lawyers and locations, she said, the firm has no intention of abandoning its low overhead model.

"I don't expect you'll see a national footprint from us like what you see from Am Law firms," she said. "There's a reason why that model doesn't work."

Instead, according to Nicolson, the firm's business plan allows for "offices strategically placed across the country."

Another cost-effective strategy the firm plans to continue is hiring only experienced attorneys, Nicolson said.

"There's nobody here that's right out of school," she said, adding that this policy "eliminates a lot of the learning curve that many companies pay a lot of money for."

It also helps draw corporate counsel looking for the most cost-effective ways to stretch shrinking legal budgets.

"We have out-of-the-block talent and experience that I think is attractive to a lot of the companies we've brought in as clients," she said. •

other since the 1980s, when they worked together at what was then known as Liebert Short Fitzpatrick & Hirshland in Philadelphia.

After Nicolson opened her firm in 2008, the two began talking about working together again and Baio said she felt Nicolson

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