



Member Spotlight



GETTING TO KNOW CYNTHIA P. LETSCH, JD, CMP™

What drew you to the practice of special needs planning?

It found me. Before college I had an opportunity to sign/sing for a church group. This means that as we sang, we signed the song. I did not know sign language, but I learned the signs for the songs we sang. Then I worked as an insurance adjuster settling cases for persons who had been permanently injured at work and could see how the newly disabled person really had no help dealing with the ramifications of the injury once the financial settlement was concluded. Then on to college where I had a friend who had two deaf siblings. She could sign faster than most people can talk, and did it together just out of habit. I learned a bit more. Once in law school, I asked to get credit for taking a sign language class; and it came along with an assignment to write a research paper and edit my professor's law review article on the newly passed Americans with Disabilities Act. Eventually, I found myself working as corporate counsel for a non-profit organization that provides intensive inpatient therapy to persons who have acquired a brain injury. As my own family matured, it happens that two of my three children and four of my seven grandchildren, and my office manager have disabilities of varying degrees. I feel like it is a calling; something really important that I am here to do for people.

What advice would you give someone who aspires to practice special needs law?

Get a mentor who practices in this area of law, and take every opportunity you have to get more than the basic training on how to write a trust. It is complicated and making a mistake can have a devastating consequence on an already vulnerable population. There is a huge need for attorneys to educate and serve persons with disabilities and their advocates and caregivers. Be prepared to be an advocate and to know and accept that you cannot control everything. There will be huge frustrations that get in the way of your ability to help people. Still, the sense of personal satisfaction I get from knowing how much I help other people is huge. If your personal sense of self worth comes from knowing how much you help others, then you will love it.

What are you most passionate about?

Educating. Our public education system does not include basic education on how to live in a rights based society, what that means in regard to powers of attorney, estate planning, and access to or freedom from government intervention.

Tell us something about you that might surprise others

I quit high school in 10th grade.

What is your ideal way to spend a Saturday?

Doing something with family and or friends. What we are doing is less important than the time together. I enjoy being outdoors: camping, water-side, riding horses, small town festivals, sitting under a tree daydreaming.

What is the last book you read?

Chica Chica Boom Boom, for fun. *Elder Law Answers* is my current read. I anticipate taking the Certified Elder Law Attorney exam in September.

Favorite book: *In our Defense*. Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy.

BONUS: What other professions did I seriously consider?

Teaching, cabinet maker, architect, women's clothing designer, doctor.