



Member Spotlight



GETTING TO KNOW ROBERT FECHTMAN, CELA

What drew you to the practice of special needs planning? What keeps you excited about it?

My first real job was doing medical research for an orthopedic surgeon. My dad was a doctor and I planned to be a doctor myself. I ended up going to law school instead. The law school happened to start an elder law clinic at the beginning of my third year. I participated in the clinic right away that semester (Bob Brogan participated in the clinic the next semester!) and I was hooked. For me, elder law is a great combination of legal and medical. Helping people is what drew me to elder law and it keeps me just as excited about it as ever.

How do you describe your work to people who are unfamiliar with it?

A lot of my work involves helping clients (and trust beneficiaries) get and/or keep the public benefits they need, although I also spend a lot of time explaining the public benefits rules to clients. The rules are usually unnecessarily complicated and the caseworkers at the public benefits agencies typically do a poor job of explaining these rules or even helping individuals access the benefits to which they are entitled.

What advice do you have for members who are new to the SNA?

Get involved! You will get much more out of the SNA if you are contributing in your own way to its success. Also, you should know that the SNA is a group of very giving lawyers. I have never once asked an SNA colleague for help or advice without getting a lot more help or advice than I could have hoped for.

What are you most passionate about?

Robin and our boys, Ben and Josh, of course! Also music (I was in the American Boychoir in Princeton, New Jersey when I was in 6th and 7th grade, I was a piano performance major and sang in an a capella group in college, and I am a church organist now) and history (I love to read biographies and books about history, especially the history of the middle ages).

What is your ideal way to spend a Saturday?

I usually start by feeding my sourdough starter, whether or not I plan to make bread later in the weekend, and then I like to do nothing important for a few hours. Robin and I love to see movies and eat at nice restaurants, and we look forward to doing a lot of baking and cooking together as my schedule eases up. We love, love, love to travel, so a Saturday in another country would be nice too, especially if that country is England!

What book, podcast or movie do you recommend to others?

I have loved The Great Courses produced by The Teaching Company for many years. These are college-level courses taught by some of the best college professors in the country. As you can tell from my earlier answers, a lot of the courses I listen to are in the areas of history and music. I don't buy new cars very often, so I only recently have my first car that doesn't have a CD player in it, and I'm please to say I have figured out how to get all of The Great Courses I want on Audible.