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**FIRM HELPS LAWYERS GET A LIFESTYLE
INDUSTRY WATCH**

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Carrie N. Schneider may just be a modern Renaissance woman.

In addition to practicing in the corporate and intellectual property groups at one of the East Bay's oldest firms, she's been a bartender on the Mediterranean shore and has tended to donkeys on an organic farm in Mexico. She's trekked through Vietnam, Brazil and myriad points between. A competitive gymnastics career earned her NCAA All-American honors at the University of California, Berkeley. She's taught high school science, and is a certified personal trainer and instructor of yoga, spinning and cardio-kickboxing.

Now, two years into her legal career, when most big law attorneys of her class are slogging to meet the expectations in line with their exorbitant pay, Schneider, 31, and Oakland-based Donahue Gallagher Woods are basking in what's become nothing short of a symbiotic relationship.

Perhaps it's the "lifestyle firms" that have the monopoly on the legal industry's most well-rounded talent.

Ask 10 lawyers to define the term and you're bound to get 10 responses, each similar yet slightly nuanced.

Schneider defined it as such: "That I have the time to exercise, have wine with my friends, hang out with the boyfriend, take vacations ... "

Schneider has never aspired to join a big firm. She never wanted her life to revolve around work.

"It's really important for me to have time for me, my family and my friends, and I'm big-time into extracurricular activities," she said, echoing the sentiments of so many young lawyers today.

Ditto for Donahue Gallagher. It's not a firm where you walk the halls at 8 p.m. and find the place filled with attorneys, said Michael J. Dalton, a corporate partner and one of the firm's two chief operations officers.

The lawyers are, however, expected to get their work done, even if that means staying all night, according to Joseph A. Woods, the sole remaining firm namesake, now an of-counsel.

"Not on any sort of sustained basis," said Woods, who joined in fall 1949 out of Boalt Hall. "You do that in order to meet the exigencies of the situation that exists right then."

Plus, he says, there's no pressure to bill an extraordinary number of hours.

Of course, lifestyle isn't a formalized firm policy.

"It's just a way of doing things," Dalton said. "The striving for work/life balance and the high degree of flexibility that we have here is really part of the firm culture. Some of us do better than others maintaining that balance, but overall I'd say across the firm we do pretty well."

Donahue Gallagher recognizes that family time is irreplaceable. At 3 p.m. on Oct. 31, for instance, the whistle blows so parents can rush home to chaperone trick-or-treaters. There are annual tennis and golf tournaments as well as a firm picnic and the traditional Oakland A's tailgate outing has exceeded its 30th year, said Woods.

"We've always wanted people to have a life outside of work and time for their families," Dalton said. "We've been flexible with people working part time and taking leaves for various reasons. We try to create a culture where we all work hard but put some boundaries around that."

Free time for Schneider is devoted to exercise, which includes the aforementioned activities as well as hiking, camping and competitive triathlons; time with boyfriend Dave, a law school find; sipping wine or martinis - preferably red and dirty, respectively - with the girlfriends; reading novels in Golden Gate Park; and the list goes on.

It's no secret that flexibility and an appreciation for life beyond the firm milieu has become an increasingly popular inquiry among law students.

Jonathan N. Osder, a transactional intellectual-property partner and co-chief operating officer, said Donahue Gallagher's lifestyle culture directly contributes to attorney performance.

"We want people to be charged, to be enjoying their lives and their families so that when they do come here they're that much more mindful of the work they're doing," he said. "They tend to really throw themselves into the work as a result. They're not engaged in punitive billing or taking out their dissatisfaction of life on their clients or opposing counsel."

It helps in retention as well. According to Osder, of the firm's 16 partners, all but three have been at the firm for the duration of their careers, and nearly as many were summer associates in law school.

"I truly believe we're a unique firm in this market," Osder said. "It's kind of amazing that we've been around since 1918 and are still having this really cool, niche kind of experience. And we cherish it."

Big-law lawyers and their lifestyle-firm counterparts seem to be similar animals separated by a common language.

"I met someone the other day at a barbecue. She worked at a big firm and said she billed 2,800 hours last year! And I have to tell you, when we stopped talking about billable hours, we had nothing else to talk about."

Granted, Donahue Gallagher, at 35 attorneys and three Bay Area offices, isn't a so-called "mega firm," nor did it participate in the recent salary-hike frenzy. But Schneider understands that the trade-off for astronomical money is working astronomical hours.

"Those pay hikes weren't given based on pure love for the associates," she said. "Unquestionably, time is priceless. Life comes first."

For Schneider, so does the pursuit of personal goals.

Following undergraduate studies, she returned to her native San Fernando Valley to teach environmental science and ecology at Canoga Park High School.

She entered law school for much the same reason she wanted to teach: to influence social change.

"When I was looking for a new path, I thought the law might be a good route," she said. "It's difficult to evoke change, but at the grassroots community level it's possible. It's sort of like the man-in-the-mirror principle - if everyone does it right, all of a sudden it's global."

According to Schneider, when considering firms as a second-year law student, Donahue Gallagher's steeped tradition in East Bay pro bono was yet another *pièce de résistance*.

Since joining the firm in 2005, Schneider has allocated a significant amount of time to pro-bono work to cut her teeth in the corporate arena: creating various business entities for nonprofit organizations, many of which themselves provide no-fee, charitable services.

Indeed, pro-bono work is another cultural distinction at Donahue Gallagher, and has been since its inception, said Woods. Firm policy holds that all pro-bono hours count toward the billable quota, and there's no stated limit on how much work a firm attorney completes.

Donahue Gallagher was the first law firm to join the Alameda County Bar Association's Volunteer Legal Services Corporation when the program was created in 1982, and its attorneys have remained major contributors ever since.

Last year, a little less than 60 percent of the firm's attorneys, half of them partners, logged a total of 522 hours to various pro-bono projects. Schneider's share alone topped 165 hours.

Both Schneider and the firm were recently recognized for their efforts. In June, the Volunteer Legal Services Corporation recognized Schneider as its 2006 Volunteer of the Year. In September, based on the nomination, the firm itself will receive the president's Pro Bono Service Award for a mid-sized firm by the California Bar Association.

"It's not coincidental," assured Woods, a former VLSC president. "The firm's policy contributed to her performance and her performance contributed to the firm's performance."

Both the young attorney and the 90-year-old firm continue benefitting from the symbiosis.

"Carrie was a beginning transaction lawyer, and through her work she acquired daily experience and skill," said Jonathan M. Wong, the firm's pro-bono coordination partner. "She got to work with clients in a real-world business setting, and our paying clients who need that corporate work are going to benefit from that experience."