

THE Mecklenburg TIMES

Approach to working mothers earns statewide recognition

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CHARLOTTE — Rosalind Lane joined Moore & Van Allen when she graduated from law school in 2000. She joined as a member in the health care practice and was on the membership-track.

In 2003 she had her first child. She received eight weeks of maternity leave, as many women do. However, Lane found that she needed a little more in terms of flexibility.

"I've always been involved not only with my work here at the firm, but also involved in the community," said Lane, who is a board member of the Afro-American Cultural Center, a member of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and is active in other community programs.

"I needed some flexibility in terms of how I crafted my schedule and how many hours I needed to bill for my clients," she said. Lane approached the leadership at her firm and discussed a "reduced billable-hours schedule" where she would work fewer hours and telecommute when needed. According to Lane the firm members were "very supportive" and she remained on the membership-track.

When Lane had her second child in 2006, she approached the members again to make further adjustments to her schedule.

"Once you reduce your hours to a certain point, you can step off the membership-track permanently or temporarily," Lane explained.

For now, Lane is temporarily off of the membership-track, however she has been able to reserve "the option to get back on" in the future.

Lane's story and similar situations have earned Moore & Van Allen the 2007 Large Firm

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Balanced Life Workplace award, presented by the North Carolina



MecklenburgTimes photo by Carolyn Steeves

JUGGLING LAW AND LIFE: Attorney Counsel Rosalind Lane, who nominated her firm for the Balanced Life Workplace award.

Association of Women Attorneys.

"I have been a person who has taken advantage of a lot of the work-life balance policies that the firm has and I thought that the firm should be recognized," said Lane, who nominated her firm for the award.

Carol E. Bowen, a member with the firm and chair of the health care practice area, came to the firm around 1997. She recalls that in the late '90s the firm conducted a study about maternity leave and working mothers in the legal field. She is very supportive of the policies that her firm has implemented.

"I am very proud of the environment for working mothers and what we've done," Bowen said.

Bowen talked about the different options that the firm has available to their working mothers and working fathers. Including telecommuting when possible, working with their billable hours or taking time off.

"It's definitely something that's available to everyone and each case can be as unique as it needs to be toward the needs of that attorney," Lane explained. Both women believe these policies are becoming an industry-wide standard.

"I think that Moore & Van Allen is definitely in tune with, recognizes and appreciates that its employees or its attorneys can be very productive and contribute to the overall benefit of the firm in various ways," Lane said.

The Balanced Life Workplace Award is given to small, medium and large firms annually by the North Carolina Association of Women Attorneys (NCAWA).

The NCAWA judges nominees on many factors, including policies and practices on work hours, leave options, effect on partnership prospects, office benefits and flexible or alternative scheduling. The award will be presented at the annual conference in October. 