

CONNECTICUT LAWYER

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A photograph of a man with curly hair and glasses, wearing a striped shirt, playing an electric guitar on stage. The scene is lit with vibrant blue and purple stage lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The man is shown in profile, focused on his performance.

Balancing Talents and Time

**CBA Assessment
Legislative Preview
One Less Victim
Judicial Disqualification
Age Discrimination Claims**

**It's seven o'clock on a Tuesday night.
Are you staying at the office late to finish a brief?
Are you working on a chapter for your novel?
Maybe you are on your way to band practice.
Perhaps you are changing into your National Guard uniform.**

Although some people may find this surprising, there is life outside of law. A collection of attorneys explained to *Connecticut Lawyer* what they do in the hours, albeit sometimes few, they are not working—and how they can fit it all into their busy schedules. Whether they focus their time on family, their favorite hobby, or giving back to their community, these lawyers have found some fruitful ways to spend their time outside of work.

Gerald Giaimo

Gerald Giaimo is an attorney at Halloran & Sage LLP's Hartford office by day and a talented guitar player by night. Although not technically in a band, he can most often be found playing with Seth Adam and Marykate O'Neil, both artists earning moderate success in the musical world. In fact, Giaimo says he often tours with Marykate, mostly in New York. O'Neil has been reviewed by *Rolling Stone* and may have a spot in the 2010 Lilith Fair, in which Giaimo would play alongside her.

After playing in a jazz group for a while, Giaimo wanted to get himself back into rock music, so he answered an ad seeking a guitar player. In his conversation with *Connecticut Lawyer*, he reflected that when band members saw him drive up with a car seat and wearing a suit, they thought Giaimo might not fit in with them. The band soon realized the error, and this was where Giaimo met Seth Adam.

With such an involvement with music, how did he choose law as a career? His father had a law practice, and Giaimo wanted to continue the family business until a fire destroyed it, and Giaimo found himself on his own. But, he explains that he loves both music and the law. Of law Giaimo says, "I like being able to solve people's problems and

help them," and he characterizes music as "a much more lonely pursuit."

His solution to fitting everything in? Giaimo has chosen the three most important things to dedicate his time to: being an attorney, being a father, and playing guitar. He reveals that he has cut back on his involvement with CBA positions as well as former leisure activities such as vacations, movies, and hiking; he has found his passions and he is sticking to them. Giaimo believes that "balance is when it all gets done, equilibrium is when it's the right balance of things" and that on different days, different things will just have to come first.

Fred O'Brien

Fred O'Brien did things a little differently than most lawyers—he spent a good portion of his life as a musician. He met his wife while pursuing this former career path, and she has garnered success as a musician, which is still her profession. With music still partially involved in his life, O'Brien's brother, also an attorney, persuaded him to switch gears and pursue a career in law. However, O'Brien keeps a direct connection to music by playing bass in Bag of Hammers, a 6-piece band. The band mostly plays original music, and O'Brien considers it to be a "great outlet" for his creativity.

Because O'Brien's children are grown, he does not have to dedicate the time to parenthood that is necessary for parents of younger children. Although he is a partner at the Hartford firm Regnier Taylor Curran & Eddy and dedicates a lot of his time to the practice of law, he notes that everyone needs a break and "cannot [work] seven days a week because you will get burned out." He also says that he makes sure to take at least one day off per week. Although his professional life takes up a large amount of his time, O'Brien doesn't feel like he is deprived because he had the opportunity to "rock out" in his youth.

Anthony Pantuso

Anthony Pantuso also plays drums in the band Bag of Hammers. Similar to fellow band mate Fred O'Brien, Pantuso also had a musical career prior to choosing to become a lawyer. With an undergraduate degree in music, he gave himself until the end of the '80s to make it in the music business. When it did not work out, he decided to pursue law instead of a higher degree in music. He attributes this decision, and subsequently choosing to be a civil rights attorney, to "liberal views and the desire to right all the wrongs in the world."

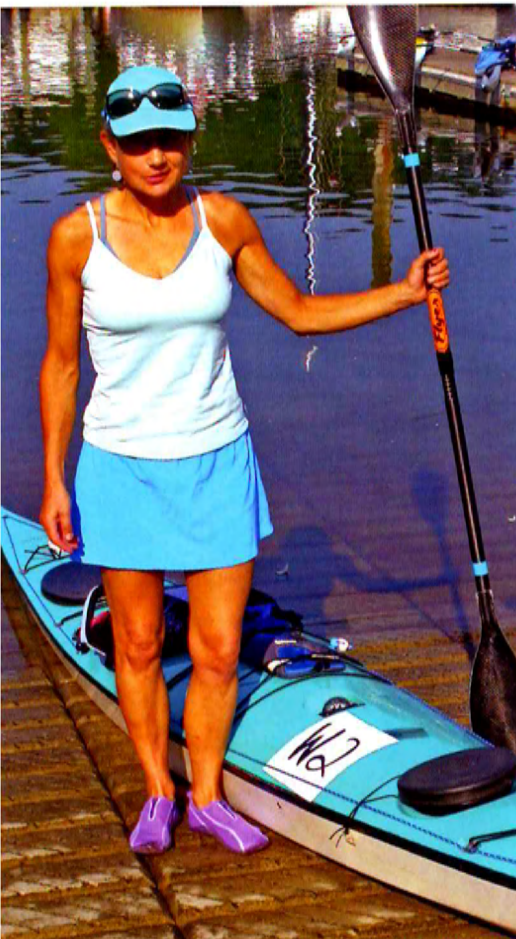


Pantuso observes that everyone needs a release and music is his way of relaxing. He would love to devote more time to music, but, currently, he says his job comes first. Aside from running his own solo practice, The Pantuso Law Firm LLC in Milford, he is also on the board of directors for the Milford Fine Arts Committee and holds membership on the CBA's Professional Discipline Committee, among many other positions. He also has a strong interest in gardening, and believes it is "very good for the soul to play in the dirt." His way of fitting in life with a busy work schedule is to plan ahead in order to build in the extra things he wants to do, which sometimes means having to go into the office on Sundays. It also means having to cancel practice often, but he tries to make sure that time is set aside if he plans to play a show.

Vincent Cervoni

Vincent Cervoni, of Gesmonde Pietrosimone & Sgrignari in Hamden, is involved with two bands during his after-work hours. Bluzberry Pi is a blues band whose name and style were inspired by the likes of Cream and ZZ Top. Cervoni is also involved with The Blue Agave, a rock cover band. He considers Bluzberry Pi his passion project, since his love is the blues and he is able to create his own music. Although he has no superstitious rituals for playing shows, he has begun to tie pink ribbons around the headstocks of the guitars he uses to play as a memorial to two friends he lost to breast cancer last February.

Cervoni has found that his current work-life balance is harder to juggle because he has a lot more on his plate. He is recently married and "trying to be more responsible and not make it about me all the time." He is also involved in several public service projects, including participation in Big Brother/Big Sister and now a newly elected member of the Wallingford town council, beginning in January 2010.



Top: Vincent Cervoni on guitar with The Blue Agaves. Photo by Josh Finkelstein.
Bottom: Sally Roberts getting ready for a day of kayaking.

Sally Roberts

Sally Roberts is a civil litigator for Brown Paindiris and Scott LLP in Hartford, but has enough hobbies to constitute a second full-time job. Although she is a dedicated lawyer, she is also dedicated to nature. With a passion that extends further than your typical hobby, Roberts can be found hiking in Bear Mountain, paddling down the Housatonic River, or leading Eco-tours with Sea Sherpa Kayak in conjunction with the Connecticut Audubon Society when she is not fulfilling her duties as a civil litigator. She participated in two major water-based competitions this season, the Blackburn Challenge in July and the Bear Mountain Challenge in August, nearly winning the latter. She believes that "the competition builds character, and the daily training regimen keeps [her] physically fit and mentally sharp, which is as good for the courtroom as it is for the boat."

With what seems to be a constantly full schedule, Sally is able to fit in work and all of her interests through "burning the midnight oil and the candle at both ends." Although what role sleep plays in her life between working late and workouts before dawn is a mystery, she still has a sense of balance. "Balance really means keeping my avocation part of my daily life...Balance means when the job gets hectic, I always include some form of personal interest time during each day. The weekends or quiet times will come eventually."

Neal Bobruff

When he is not practicing in his own solo firm, the Law Office of Neal M. Bobruff in Mystic, running is the major off-duty interest for Neal Bobruff. More specifically, he started running in 2001 and has run a total of 11 marathons since. He began running the Boston Marathon as a fundraiser for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 2005, continuing in 2007 and 2009. He has raised so much money in each of these races that he

has finished in the top ten all three years, out of over 500 fundraising runners. His total raised for this past year was \$24,397, with a total of over \$84,000 from his three races. He describes the experience of both running and fundraising as “having three full-time jobs: fundraising, training for the marathon, and [his] day job as a solo practitioner.”

Despite his desire to participate, Bobruff’s life currently goes on sans the marathon due to the major time and physical commitment training would take as well as the time commitment needed for his newly appointed two-year position as president of the Mystic and Noank Library. Of his ability to balance his life with work, Bobruff says, “Once I ran my first marathon, I realized that I can accomplish a lot more in my life than I would ever have dreamt possible. With a realistic plan and a dedication to following it, I am much more willing to undertake difficult challenges.” He also credits his office staff for their willingness to take on an extra workload as necessary during his training and fundraising. Anyone interested in knowing more about what it takes to train for a marathon may go to <http://runnealrun.blogspot.com> to read the back entries of his honest and inspiring blog.

Susan Wallace

Susan Wallace is a privately practicing attorney in Middletown as well as a member of the National Guard, serving as a JAG (Judge Advocate General Corps) officer. She decided to choose this path after becoming friends with some people who were on the GI bill while in law school, who suggested she serve as a JAG officer after she had expressed interest in joining the military. This led her to a few more years of courses in a Charlottesville, Virginia, military law school in order to become a JAG officer.

After being in the National Guard for 17 years, Wallace says she puts in a lot more

than the standard “one weekend a month, two weeks a year” required commitment, mainly because her primary goal is to accomplish her missions as they come, even if it takes more time than she is compensated for. Of her fellow JAG officers, Wallace says, “We consider ourselves to be the conscience of the military. We are there to uphold the Constitution.” She says she is able to balance her time between the National Guard, her family, and working as an attorney by knowing that “you have to remain flexible and adaptable and you have to be an energetic type of person, but there are times when it is quite difficult.” Wallace classifies her work with the National Guard as “one of the best things [she has] ever done, even though it’s difficult” and asks all members of the bar to support a veteran in any way, whether it’s through something small like mowing a lawn or something larger like rendering legal assistance.

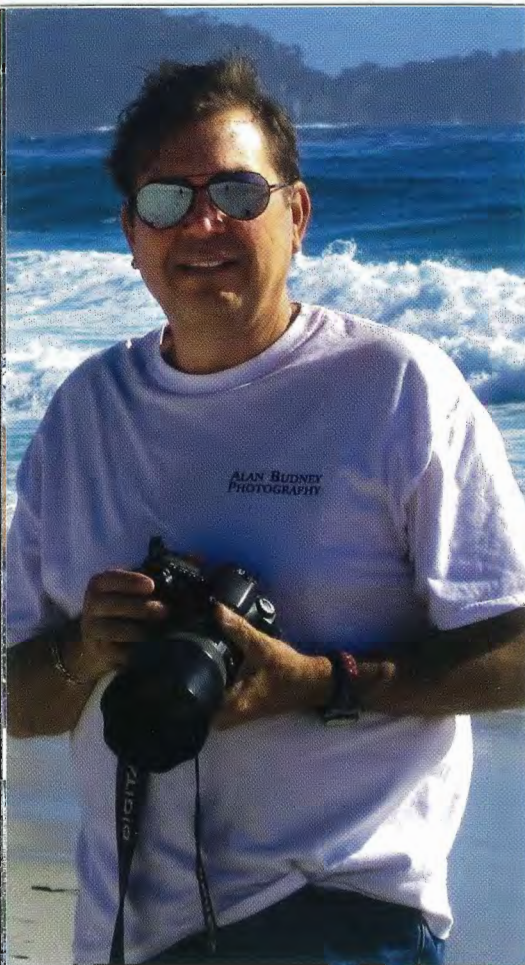
Stacy Werner

Stacy Werner is an assistant corporation counsel for the city of New Haven, specializing in contracts, with a number of out-of-work activities that keep her schedule full. She is currently a grassroots lobbyist for Great Oak Park passive trail development and a member of the Trumbull Democratic Town Committee. She has served on Trumbull’s town council for six years and campaigned twice for state representative.

Werner prides herself on being a wife and mother of two boys, ages four and seven. With what little spare time she has had over the past many years, she has written the novel *Diary of a Young Lawyer*, which combines romance, law, and coming-of-age both personally and professionally. She is in the process of writing a second novel, a love story gone wrong titled *A Portrait of Bette*. She hypothesizes that the storylines may be her “way of working out [her] frustration as a lawyer.” She is also working on getting her



Top: Marathon man Neal Bobruff finishes another race. Middle: Susan Wallace dons her National Guard uniform. Bottom: Stacy Werner — wife, mother, lawyer, and novelist.



Alan Budney with his ever-present camera.

first novel published, which in itself is a major undertaking.

Balancing her work, family life, and extra interests became, Werner admits, “much trickier with children.” Her secret is surprisingly simple, “I live and die with manual calendars.” She has a home calendar, a work calendar, and an on-the-go calendar—not one of them electronic—and makes sure that all three are properly synched because this is when she finds mistakes occur. Despite everything that is on her plate, she defines her biggest mess-up in recent times as mixing up the date of her son’s pajama day at school. What Werner also finds helpful is the set schedule of her nine-to-five job as opposed to a litigation schedule.

Alan Budney

Alan Budney, of the Law Office of Alan F. Budney Esq. in Newington, is both a privately practicing attorney and a well-rounded photographer. After gaining some experience during college, he became more serious about photography in the mid ‘90s when his children went to college and he had more time to dedicate to learning the craft, taking many classes to expand his skills.

More than just a hobby, Budney dedicates a good amount of time to his photography, including making time to photograph certain events, products, business headshots, and portraits for the Heart Gallery—a program to help children in foster care find families. He also spends a lot of time photographing scenery, especially on Cape Cod, Block Island, and Martha’s Vineyard. He has gone exclusively digital since 2002, which he says allows him more freedom with what he can do with his photos and classifies his photography as more environmentally sound due to no longer using chemicals in development.

When asked how he is able to balance his career, work with photography, and personal life, he said “I can answer that question two ways: one, I don’t have a life other than that or two, there’s nothing else I’d rather do... it’s the best of both worlds.” He says that he

has never had an experience when his work as a lawyer conflicted with a photography booking, but he has a backup lawyer friend and a backup photographer friend to cover him just in case, his law clients maintaining priority. He also says the fact that he has a significant other who supports him, accompanies him on trips, and shares his love of nature all helps in his ability to balance things. To see Alan Budney’s photography, please visit <http://budney.zenfolio.com>.

So, does balance actually exist for lawyers? It depends on whom you talk to. Renée Ber- man, solo practitioner, author, and single mother, states in her book *The Ultimate Guide to Solo and Small Firm Success* (LawFirst Publishing) that “Balance does not exist. It is the holy grail of the attorney.” She goes on to equate it to the scales of justice, which if you are successful enough to get them to balance, they will almost instantly become unbalanced again.

The ability to come as close as possible to achieving work-life balance comes down to choices. If you want to go white-water rafting one Saturday, you may have to skip your weekly Wednesday night dinner reservations in order to put in some extra time at the office, or miss band practice to attend your daughter’s dance recital.

The most common advice given to achieve a sense of balance and manageability is to create a list of the three to five most important things to focus on in your life. You may not have to devote the same amount of time to each item on the list to consider yourself balanced, but you can give the amount of time that works for you. Who says you can’t have it all? These lawyers say you just have to figure out how to manage your time appropriately. **CL**

Alysha M. Adamo is the associate editor of the Connecticut Lawyer.

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