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## IN PERSON: Mindy Sunderland knew exactly what she wanted to be — and she achieved it

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Mindy Sunderland was 10 or 12 years old when someone asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up.

“It is sort of odd, I guess,” the Ashland, Ky., native recalls, “but the family story is that I said, ‘I want to go to Transylvania University, major in history and be a lawyer.’ ”

She pretty much nailed it, except that she also added a minor in Spanish before going on to the University of Kentucky College of Law.

Today, Sunderland is a partner and managing director at Louisville-based Morgan & Pottinger PSC, where she focuses on banking and finance law. M&P, which also has offices in Lexington, Bowling Green and New Albany, is Louisville’s 18th largest firm, according to Business First research.

Sunderland loved growing up in the tri-state area — Ashland is part of a metro market with Huntington, W. Va., and Ironton, Ohio — but unlike her younger brother, an account rep for Coca-Cola Co. who also owns a real estate business, she saw her professional life playing out elsewhere.

She expected that to be Lexington, but at UK she took a law course taught by M&P shareholder John McGarvey and then accepted his job offer in Louisville 15 years ago. It’s the only law firm where she’s ever worked, and McGarvey has been a mentor.

“He took me under his wing. I wouldn’t be where I am without him, both from a practice standpoint and a management standpoint,” she says. “He’s encouraged me in both areas throughout my entire career.”

McGarvey noticed Sunderland right away. “You get to know a class quickly, who is prepared, who is willing to participate in class discussion, and who understands difficult subject matter,” he said via email. “Mindy checked all of those boxes. She was a stand-out in class and showed the makings of the good lawyer she has become.

“Being a good lawyer means a career-long interest in learning and keeping up to date on an ever-changing body of statutory and case law. Mindy has not only done that but has become a star at presentations for our bank clients who have to use the law every day in their businesses.”



CHRISTOPHER FRYER

Mindy Sunderland is the first female managing director of Morgan & Pottinger PSC.

Sunderland's practice concentrates on banking and finance law, loan workouts, bankruptcy, commercial litigation and commercial real estate. She loves how the work draws on a core skill set but presents unique challenges case by case. "Whether I'm customizing loan documents or working on a special asset, it's like a puzzle, trying to make all of the pieces fit," she says.

As the first female managing director at M&P, she jokes, "I make everyone address me as 'Madame Managing Director.'" The firm's three-member executive committee, which includes Sunderland and until recently, McGarvey, oversees major management issues, and as managing director she keeps tabs on day-to-day operations and helps develop and steer the firm's strategic growth plan.

Divorced and with a young son named Cooper who's almost 10 and into baseball, soccer and Tae Kwon Do, Sunderland says her life consists of "work, practices and board meetings." They like going to movies together, watching UK men's basketball and traveling.

Sunderland's father is a country club manager, and her mother is a nurse. As the first in her family circle to gain a professional degree, she appreciates how they held her to high standards in both academics and community involvement.

Her own service work includes Family Scholar House, which seeks to break the cycle of poverty by providing college education to single parents. As a single parent herself, though one in an admittedly good situation, she felt drawn to the nonprofit. She sits on its board, chairs the development committee and leads the annual Wine, Women & Shoes fundraiser.

She also chairs the Kentucky board of what's known as IOLTA, or Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts, a sort of statewide legal aid organization that provides grants to support pro bono legal work. And, keeping it hyperlocal, she also chairs the board of the Eastwood Fire District near her home.

"My parents were always involved with organizations and at church, and I believe in giving back and recognizing my blessings," she says. "I think we all have an obligation to be involved in our community and support it in whatever way we can."

Sunderland caught the foreign language bug when her Spanish teacher at Paul Blazer High School started an exchange program with a school near Madrid. A student from that school lived with Sunderland's family for a couple weeks in the fall, and she stayed with that student's family the following spring.

At Transy, she spent a semester studying in Segovia, Spain, and she now builds that long-running love of international travel into her life. Spain, Iceland and Ireland are favorites, and she's cooked up a Caribbean trip later this year so Cooper can take a junior discovery course in scuba diving.

On her professional horizon, she wants to help M&P expand the legal services it can offer clients.

"We've been around 40-plus years and we're known as a banking and financial firm," she says. "Our expertise is still there, but there have been a lot of changes in the industry, and we want to continue our success and remain relevant. While banks and financial entities are our clients, they're operated by people. Our clients are people who need service, and we need to serve clients in a more holistic manner."

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Q&A

**M&P moved from near Sixth and Main into the Brown & Williamson tower a couple years ago, and you were in charge of the move. What happened?** We had to work around an ice storm/snowstorm. We had to move the move up a day to avoid it. We decided that morning, and the movers came that afternoon. We weren't able to get into the new office till Monday.

**Do you dream in Spanish?** When I studied abroad, I lived with a family who spoke no English, and I was pretty fluent by the time that semester ended. A sign of true fluency is when you think in the language. I was thinking and even dreaming in Spanish when I came back, but that's gone away. I still have enough to travel.

**You gave your son the travel bug. When will he take his first overseas trip?**

My former in-laws asked him where he wanted to go, and he said Rome. They said how about somewhere in the U.S.? They're planning a trip next year to England and Scotland.

**How do you balance being managing director and attorney at law?** One thing I like about Morgan & Pottinger is that we have a culture that fosters professional growth along with a work-life balance. We provide a lot of attorney-to-attorney support. I've got a lot of support here from people who can step in and help me out with whatever projects or matters I may be working on, so I can be sure I'm giving the firm sufficient attention as well.

**How would you describe your leadership style?** I believe leaders should be versatile and employ whatever style is appropriate to the needs of the firm (or employee). I'm always working to improve my leadership skills.

**What's your morning routine?** I'm not a morning person. It usually involves the snooze button and a lot of rushing around.

**Coffee, tea or something else?** Coke Zero from my refrigerator. Though I also enjoy vanilla lattes from Heine Bros.

**You and your son can have dinner anywhere in town. Who decides, and what'll it be?**

He decides. Always. And it's always Blaze Pizza.

**Most recent first-run movie you've seen?**

My son and I saw "Black Panther" recently. It was awesome.

**Favorite Louisville landmark?** Louisville Zoo

**Best advice you ever received?** It's more of a personal motto, but "happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have."

**Something you'd like to get better at?** Having patience.

**Technology — love it, loathe it or tolerate it?** I both love and loathe it. It makes life easier in a lot of ways but also harder in others. As a society, we've made a lot of trade-offs for the convenience and flexibility technology provides.

**If I had a super power, it would be ...** The ability to control time!

MINDY SUNDERLAND

**Title:** Shareholder and Managing Director, Morgan & Pottinger PSC

**Age:** 39

**Hometown:** Ashland, Ky.

**Neighborhood:** Eastwood

**Career history:** Morgan and Pottinger, 2002 to present

**Education history:** J.D., University of Kentucky College of Law, 2003; bachelor's degree in history, Transylvania University, 2000

**Family:** Son, Cooper

**Hobbies:** Reading, traveling, walking, practicing and watching sports with Cooper