



LAWYERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Finding *Fulfillment*

Throughout her career, Berkeley County attorney Kimberley D. Crockett has found passion and purpose in community service

The path to fulfillment isn't always a straight line. In 1999, Kimberley D. Crockett left her position as an English literature professor to return to law school. In 2014, after 10 years as a prosecuting attorney, she hung out her shingle and opened a private criminal defense practice in Martinsburg. In Crockett's words, she "stepped out on faith."

"I took a 10-year detour, but I found my way home," Crockett said. "You hope to have a long, fulfilling life — how much better would it be if you were doing something you loved?"

Along the way, Crockett's commitment to community service has remained unchanged. As a professor at Delaware State University, she taught in the Upward Bound summer program for low-income high school students, many of whom were the first in their family to pursue a college education. She also ran a before-and after-school program at an area elementary school.

"I saw one of my elementary students being failed by the system," Crockett said. "I was young and naïve and thought I had it all figured out — I would go back to law school and fix the system he was caught up in."

By Katherine Pyles

Crockett attended the West Virginia University College of Law on the W.E.B. Du Bois Fellowship. During her first year, she met her husband Brian C. Crockett, a West Virginia native who was one year ahead of her in school.

“When I went back to law school, I wasn’t sure where I’d finally land,” she said. “I just knew I wanted to do something helpful. When I met Brian, it became pretty clear that I was going to be a permanent West Virginian.”

During her third year of law school, Crockett was a law clerk extern for Judge W. Craig Broadwater, district court judge for the northern district of West Virginia. After earning her J.D. in 2002, she was a law clerk for Judge Donald H. Cookman, circuit court judge for Hampshire, Hardy and Pendleton counties.

Crockett completed her term as a law clerk and, one week later, had her first son, Satchel. She was home with her newborn when she received a call from Pamela Games-Neely, Berkeley County prosecutor, asking if she’d like to interview for an assistant prosecutor position.

“I told her I just had a baby, and she said, ‘Bring him to the interview!’” Crockett said. “I brought my two-week-old son to the interview, and a couple of months later I started as assistant prosecutor.”

Crockett was an assistant prosecutor in Berkeley County from 2004-2011 and then served as assistant prosecutor in Jefferson County from 2011-2014. During her first year in Jefferson County, she held a one-year appointment as a special assistant United States attorney, prosecuting federal crimes like drug trafficking, illegal firearm possession and violations of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act.

In 2014, Crockett made the difficult decision to swap an accomplished career — and steady paycheck — for her own practice as a criminal defense attorney. Her solo practice also includes adoption cases and child abuse and neglect cases, and she is frequently



appointed guardian ad litem by family and circuit courts.

“You need good people on both sides, the prosecution and the defense, but I realized I was putting my efforts in the wrong place for my own personal fulfillment,” she said. “As a prosecutor I kept a part-time private practice, focusing on adoption work, but that wasn’t enough. I’m interested in civil liberties and making sure individuals receive due process under the law, and it was just natural for me to become a defense attorney.”

Her husband, a federal defense attorney for most of his career, would agree.

“We both feel a strong sense of responsibility to the community as a whole — and whether Kim

is prosecuting cases or defending them, she's still fulfilling that desire to serve," said Brian Crockett, an assistant federal defender in Berkeley County. "But her temperament was unlike most other prosecutors. She could rationally look at a case and not see just the criminal or just the act. She could look at the whole picture and see what a just resolution would be."

Whether in the classroom or the courtroom, whether on the side of the prosecution or the defense, Crockett has maintained a focus on problem solving, hard work and effective communication throughout her career.

"I always enjoy having Kim in my courtroom," said Judge Michael D. Lorensen, circuit judge for the 23rd circuit. "She does advocacy the way it needs to be done, which is well considered and well thought out. Everything she does is the result of thoughtful preparation."

Judge David P. Greenberg, family court judge for the 24th circuit, presides over the juvenile drug court program in Berkeley and Jefferson counties. The multidisciplinary program includes judges, attorneys, law enforcement officers and service providers who work together pro bono with the goal of helping juvenile drug offenders graduate high school and live productive, crime-free lives.

"When we brought the program to the region, I asked for Kim to be the representative from the prosecutor's office," Greenberg said. "Then she started her own practice, which is an awfully large task, and I wasn't sure what would happen. But there she was, every Tuesday at 3 p.m., serving as volunteer defense counsel. There was never a pause. She just switched sides. We never even had to have the conversation about whether she'd continue to serve."

Greenberg said Crockett often goes beyond the call of duty with her clients, not only providing legal counsel but also offering guidance to parents and helping families locate valuable resources and services.

"She has a work ethic and a sense of compassion that go well beyond whatever job she's doing," Greenberg said. "Those are two things you either have or don't have, and Kim has brought them to every role she has played, both in and out of the courtroom."

As president of the Eastern Panhandle Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, the largest African-American public service organization in the world,



After 10 years as a prosecuting attorney, Crockett switched gears to work in private practice, specializing in criminal defense.

Crockett organizes events ranging from political candidate forums to youth mentoring programs to scholarship banquets. She is currently leading a series of workshops to educate the community on new expungement laws.

"A lot of people are unaware that expungement laws even exist," said Hassan S. Rasheed, an assistant prosecutor in Jefferson County who volunteers his time and expertise for the workshops. "There are people who committed a minor crime when they were very young but have rehabilitated themselves to be able to support their families, and their criminal record is keeping them from getting a job. It's in my interest as a prosecutor, and within my responsibility to keep people safe, to help people stay engaged in their community and not commit more crimes."

Rasheed said he knew he wanted to get involved as soon as Crockett asked him to help.

"Kim is diligent and organized and very good at bringing people together," he said.

The Crocketts' two sons, Satchel and Sidney, are now 11 and 9. Neither wants to be an attorney — Satchel wants to design video games and Sidney wants to become a chef.

"I just hope my boys will be men of honesty and integrity," Crockett said. "The most valuable asset I have is my word. I hope they will be motivated, honest men whose word can be trusted." **WVU**

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