

A Strong Partner

DeVona Wright Cottrell named to "Forty Under 40"



DeVona Wright Cottrell

DeVona Wright Cottrell, Associate General Counsel at Baird, was selected as one of *The Milwaukee Business Journal's* Forty Under 40 winners for 2014.

"I am extremely humbled by the honor and motivated to continue to make an impact in my profession and the community," said DeVona. "I believe my purpose in life is to make a difference where I can, and this honor serves as confirmation that I am living out my purpose."

DeVona was nominated by Paul Purcell, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, and Leslie Dixon, Chief Human Capital Officer, who applauded DeVona for making Baird a great place to work and improving the Milwaukee-area community. "In her six years at Baird, DeVona has built strong partnerships with Baird senior leaders, advising them on legal matters while also dedicating time to focus on Baird's diversity initiatives as co-chair of PRISM – Baird's Multicultural Associate Resource Group (ARG)," they wrote. "We are honored to work side by side with DeVona and firmly believe she is one of Milwaukee's bright young talents."

Paul Schultz, General Counsel at Baird, added: "Over the years, we've asked DeVona to take on new challenges and she has always been willing and has welcomed the opportunity to expand her knowledge so that she can provide the best advice to her clients. She is viewed by many associates throughout the firm as a real advisor and not just a legal practitioner."

DeVona embraces opportunities to help others develop and grow. She approached Baird senior leaders about the need for increased education in the African-American community about investing. As a result, the "Sisters with Stock" investment club was formed in 2009 and included African-American women who worked at Baird and other employers. DeVona serves as president of the club and leads the group's efforts. In addition to this involvement, for the last three years DeVona has helped lead Baird's efforts to recruit diverse talent at the annual National Black MBA Association Conference Career Fair.

"DeVona is welcoming, engaging and supportive of developing all talent at Baird," said Mary Ellen Stanek, Director of Asset Management. "She is particularly effective in building bridges to leadership at the firm and always raises her hand to be a part of the solution. She is very deserving of the Forty Under 40 honor."

Beyond her contributions at Baird, DeVona is an active community volunteer. She serves on the boards of many community groups, including Milwaukee Collegiate Academy and the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation's loan committee. DeVona also serves as a mentor to many and provides pro bono legal advice. She also volunteered in the Mentoring Circles program between Baird and the Lubar School of Business at UW-Milwaukee. ▶

BAIRD ASSOCIATES RECOGNIZED IN PREVIOUS YEARS

The Milwaukee Business Journal "Forty Under 40"

Thomas Lacy, 2011
Stacy Williams, 2010
J. Bary Morgan, 2005
Peter Kies, 2004
Dan Tranchita, 2003

Crain's Cleveland Business "Forty Under 40"

Brian Kurtz, 2009

Investment Dealers' Digest "Forty Under 40"

Joel Cohen, 2008
David Silver, 2007
David Wierman, 2007

Corridor Business Journal (Iowa) "Forty Under 40"

Craig Vander Leest, 2007

A Strong Partner *continued*

"DeVona volunteered to be a mentor despite an exceedingly busy schedule, including a demanding job at Baird, family responsibilities and volunteering in the community," explained Judy Scott, Senior Advisor in Investment Banking at Baird, who leads the mentoring program. "She took her role as a mentor very seriously, never stinting on the relationship. She was able to forge strong bonds with her protégés and at the same time demonstrate to them how a true professional operates at a high level in the world of business."

Prior to joining Baird in 2007, DeVona was a partner at Gonzalez, Saggio & Harlan LLP and previously was an associate attorney at Cook & Franke S.C. in estate planning and corporate transactions. In 2009, she was recognized by *Milwaukee Magazine* as one of "The State's Outstanding Young Lawyers."

A Milwaukee native, DeVona was the first in her family to graduate from college and worked two jobs while attending school. DeVona earned her JD from UW-Madison, MBA from UWM and BA in political science from Jackson State University, summa cum laude.

"I am eternally grateful to Baird for being a company that invests in talent and for affording me the opportunities to flourish in my career and community in such a way to be recognized by this honor," DeVona added. "I am hopeful that this honor serves as a beacon of light to the youth and young professionals in our community that what often seems impossible is possible with faith, hard work and perseverance."

The Business Journal's Forty Under 40 award profiles Milwaukee-area individuals under the age of 40 who are making a difference in their communities and professions. Profiles of the 2014 winners were published in a special section in the Feb. 21 edition and all winners were honored at an awards event on Feb. 24. ■