

Fillies in the Workplace:

Laura D'Angelo

Equine, Gaming & Business Attorney at Dinsmore

A CANADIAN IN KENTUCKY

When Laura D'Angelo was growing up, she had a big poster on her bedroom wall of a beautiful Lexington, Ky., horse farm, complete with white fencing and horses in a field. Not unusual for someone who loves horses, right? But D'Angelo was nowhere near the Horse Capital of the World. She lived in a small community called Meaford, north of Toronto in Ontario, Canada.

"My mom says that I constantly asked for a pony when I was a little toddler," she said. No one in her family rode a horse, but when she was eight years old her parents bought her a little gray Welsh pony.

"We had a very small piece of acreage with a barn and a ring, surrounded by probably 1,000 acres of apple orchards," D'Angelo said. She had plenty of space to ride her pony. At age 10 she started taking riding lessons and two years later she was showing in the pony hunter division, then moving on to "A" rated shows with another horse. As a teenager she qualified for the Ontario Young Riders team and trained with a three-day event trainer from Europe.



Photo by Keni parks

by Kathie Stamps

"Through riding and through three-day eventing, I traveled and was exposed to so many different people and international people," she said. Even though she grew up in a small town, D'Angelo received an education that would serve her well in her future law career by meeting other horse enthusiasts who happened to be attorneys, CEOs and people from all kinds of socioeconomic backgrounds.

At the University of Guelph in Ontario,

D'Angelo pursued an undergraduate degree in science and earned a B.S. in human biology. She was thinking about going on to veterinary school but while she was riding horses for a couple of different business people, one of them suggested she get an MBA. He wrote a recommendation for her and she was accepted into York University in Toronto, Canada's No. 1 business school, "which totally changed my life," she said.

Armed with a business degree, she had an internship and then a full-time job in marketing management at Procter & Gamble in Toronto, where the company's international office was at the

time. P&G's corporate headquarters is in Cincinnati, where the Dinsmore law firm was founded in the early 1900s. D'Angelo is a partner at the Dinsmore office in Lexington.

When she decided to go to law school, she chose the University of Kentucky. To check out the city, her first two stops were Keeneland and the Kentucky Horse Park, because she would be weaving horses into her Kentucky experience.

"Lexington seemed like the perfect place for that," she said.

D'Angelo was surprised by how few riding stables and competitive barns there were in Lexington 20 years ago, compared with what she was used to in Canada.

"The area north of Toronto was a huge horse sport area, with more opportunity to find trainers and horse shows," she said. "It was more popular there than it was here at the time."

That has changed dramatically in recent years. There are 16 "A" rated horse shows at the Kentucky Horse Park every year. Lexington has many riders and trainers now, some of whom are now D'Angelo's clients. After law school, she worked for a small firm no longer in existence, then became an associate at Stites & Harbison in Lexington. In the early 2000s she left the Bluegrass for a couple of years to serve as general counsel for Gulfstream Park in Miami, and in Toronto she handled corporate work at the headquarters of Gulfstream's owner, Magna Entertainment Corporation. In early 2004 she returned to Lexington. She chaired the equine and gaming practice at Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs before making the move to Dinsmore in the fall of 2011.

As a partner at Dinsmore, she works with equine and gaming law, as well as business law. On the equine side, she deals with purchases and sales of sport horses, primarily Thoroughbreds, along with stallion syndications and contracts for boarding agreements and training agreements. She has handled transactions and syndications for Breeders' Cup horses, and she did the documentation for the original owner of Big Brown, the 2008 Kentucky Derby winner.

The gaming aspect of her law practice started as a natural progression out of working with racetracks, advising them on pari-mutuel wagering regulations. "For the last 10 or 12 years, horse racing has been the only legal online gaming you could do," she said. D'Angelo advises companies that provide those online services, because they have to be licensed and regulated in all states from which they take bets. Other forms of online gaming, like

poker and casino games, are trying to become legalized on the Internet.

"It is widely known in Europe that you can bet on virtually anything and everything on the Internet and different platforms," she said. European operators with online gaming capabilities are waiting to enter the U.S. market, so D'Angelo has some international clients she is advising. Software allows online companies to trace every single betting transaction if need be; online betting is not anonymous the way it is with an in-person cash wager at a racetrack.

Yes, D'Angelo enjoys going to Keeneland. Not as a handicapper or bettor, but as a spectator. She rides as often as she can, typically two or three times a week. Her eight-year-old daughter, Lilly, has also started riding.



"We spend a lot of time at her riding lessons," D'Angelo said. "She loves animals; she loves to be at the barn and loves to ride."

D'Angelo and her daughter have two cats, two dogs and two horses. D'Angelo's retired show jumper, whose barn name is Risky, lives on a farm in Paris. He is 24 years old, a Thoroughbred from Maryland that used to compete at a top amateur level in show jumping with his previous owner. D'Angelo purchased him in 2004. His show name is Billable Hours.

When she moved to Lexington, she brought a horse from Canada with her. "He didn't like cross-country," she said. "He was very good at dressage and show jumping." She was taking lessons from a show jumper trainer who had moved here from Chicago; he encouraged her to continue show jumping instead of three-day eventing. She's been involved with show jumping

ever since and has earned quite a few ribbons at the Kentucky Horse Park in the amateur owner jumpers division and the adult amateur jumpers. While her trainer goes off to Grand Prix horse shows in other cities and countries, D'Angelo prefers to stick with Lexington.

"It's hard to justify travel when you can show in your own backyard and sleep in your own bed at night," she said.

When the Kentucky Horse Park opened in 1978 and hosted the Three-Day Event world championship for the first time in the United States, D'Angelo was a kid in Canada reading every horse magazine she could get her hands on. "I was thinking, What a cool place, that there would be a city with a park dedicated to horses," she said. "Now I live here."

She said it's easy for Lexingtonians to take for granted how amazing the Kentucky Horse Park is. She and her daughter spend a lot of time there, taking in all the sights and watching their friends ride and compete.

When she's not at work or around horses, D'Angelo enjoys traveling. She has been to Greece, Turkey, France and Ireland—and, by the way, she is a dual citizen of Canada and the United States. One of her favorite spots to visit is Argentina, where she has a few clients. In 2010 she had the opportunity to attend the Argentine Open, the top polo tournament in the world.

"I have played a little club polo here in Lexington," she said. This past winter she played indoor polo, which is a slower game played with a larger, softer ball. "It's a good way to learn the game and the strategy," she said.

Horse riding, practicing law and raising a kid—how does she do it all? "It's not easy," she admitted, "but you do what you love."

D'Angelo also sits on the boards of directors for LexArts, Commerce Lexington and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. And, on top of everything else, she teaches a class in equine law at the UK College of Law.

"It's a ton of work," she said, but teaching forces her, in a good way, to stay current with legal issues. She has also met a lot of young lawyers. "I can walk around town or go to bar events and I run into these young lawyers I wouldn't otherwise know," she said.



Laura and daughter Lilly | Frank Becker, THE TIME Photography

She considers herself very fortunate to be able to practice the type of law she enjoys, and in diverse areas. "Every single day is different," she said. "I never have the same day twice because you never know who's going to call you."



Frank Becker, THE TIME Photography