

# Ward and Smith: Our Highlights of 2023

Written By **Laura V. Hudson** (LVHudson@wardandsmith.com)  
December 27, 2023



**As we reflect on the past year, it's evident that 2023 has been remarkable for Ward and Smith.**

We've welcomed new team members, launched new practice groups, and been recognized in some pretty rare air, if we do say so ourselves. Let's take a moment to reflect on some of the big moves from the past year:

## New Faces



Ellis Boyle



Melody King



Joe Knott



Art DeBaugh



Terri Sharp



Hannah Daigle



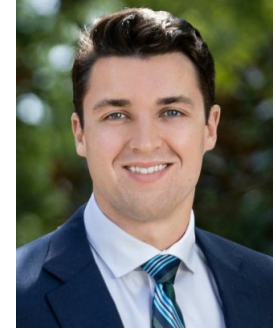
Emily Martchek



Sydney Smith



Genesis Torres



Jameson Doub

In January, we welcomed a trio of seasoned litigators—Ellis Boyle, Melody King, and Joe Knott—and Art DeBaugh, an intellectual property attorney focusing on international IP. Ellis and Joe have long careers in personal injury litigation, while Melody focuses her practice on family law matters.

Our firm's trusts and estates practice welcomed former Clerk of Superior Court for Craven County Terri Sharp in February. She also practiced law in New Bern prior to her service as Clerk.

This Fall, we saw the arrival of four energetic new attorneys straight from law school: Hannah Daigle, Emily Martchek, Sydney Smith, and Genesis Torres.

Jameson Doub of Greenville was the last to join us this year from his clerkship with the Honorable Joseph Callaway, the United States Bankruptcy Court Judge for the Eastern District of NC. Jameson has been an excellent sport, joining a firm without a regular office!

### **New Spaces**

Jameson and all of our other attorneys resident in the Greenville office had an eventful fall as we executed a major renovation of our building on West Firetower Road in Greenville. The space was last updated in the 1980s, so our attorneys and staff are very excited to be in the modern, open, and entirely functional space. We've added outdoor space for entertaining, and once the weather is nice this Spring, plan an open house for our clients and friends.



Earlier this year, we finished the renovation of our Wilmington building. We also added indoor-outdoor space with a covered patio, grills, and far better conference room configurations. Much like our other offices, we also updated the look and feel with our signature Down East marsh view artwork behind the reception desk. Everyone is enjoying the new space, and it makes the hardships of practicing law while renovating all worth it! (Yes, really.)

### **New Groups**

With the pace of change, there is always something new to address, and the firm is a strong believer in being "out front" when clients need help. This year, we brought several new multi-disciplinary teams of attorneys together to help clients with various areas of concern.

Spearheading our new Artificial Intelligence Practice Group is Angela Doughty. Angela leads a group of "naturally intelligent" attorneys to advise clients on how to effectively and appropriately deploy AI in their businesses and avoid regulatory issues. Her topic received the most interest at our recent In-House Counsel

Symposium, with a line waiting to speak with her after her CLE presentation. We think this means there is both interest and a healthy level of concern regarding how to deploy AI "right." We're here to help!

Attorney Kristin Mitcham leads the way in our Equine Law Practice Group. An avid horsewoman, Kristin, a real estate attorney, kept seeing people in her circle who had very specific legal needs in the equine industry. She had the firm take a closer look, and we know horses represent a growing part of the agribusiness economy, and riding, dressage, and exhibitions are popular. In addition to purchase, breeding, stabling, transportation, and training agreements, horse owners must consider how to provide for their horses in their estates. With the advent of sports betting in North Carolina, this industry is poised for further growth.

As co-chairs of our new Insurance Counseling and Recovery Practice Group, Allen Trask and Amy Wooten bring seasoned counsel to the needs of a business as commercial policyholders in negotiations with insurers on coverage issues. Whether a business has a coverage question about what the contract says or if an active dispute leads to litigation, we work with policyholders to help them maximize their insurance benefits. Amy and Allen are fluent in "insurance" and work with commercial clients on all sorts of coverage; from D&O to natural disasters to data security, they can help.

### **New Honors**

In 2023, many of our attorneys were honored by being named to influential power lists, such as Co-managing Directors, Brad Evans and Devon Williams, who were named to the "Managing Partners to Watch" list by North Carolina Lawyers Weekly and earned a spot on *Business North Carolina's* 2023 Power List in the law category. Brad was also invited to join the American Board of Trial Advocates, one of the most well-respected organizations for experienced trial lawyers and judges.

The hits didn't stop there: health care attorney Michael Fields was selected to *NC Lawyers Weekly's* 2023 Health Care Power List; Knox Proctor was named "Lawyer of the Year" by *Best Lawyers*; creditors' rights attorney Lance Martin was honored as a top author award by JD Supra; *Business North Carolina* named Asheville Real Estate attorney Joanne Badr to its Legal Elite Hall of Fame as well as recognized creditors' rights attorney Lily Faulconer as a 2023 Trailblazer; and *Super Lawyers* honored Greenville attorney Paul Fanning as a Top 100 North Carolina Super Lawyer.

Additionally, our intellectual property (IP) team earned international and national recognition. This includes Art DeBaugh, Angela Doughty, Erica Rogers, and Joe Schouten being recognized by the World Trademark Review 1000, as well as Angela, Joe, and Ryan Simmons being selected for inclusion into *Managing IP's* IP Stars, while Erica made the publication's Rising Stars list.

And we had more than half of our attorneys honored by Best Lawyers, Super Lawyers, or *Business North Carolina's* Legal Elite.

### **More News**

In 2023, news about the Camp Lejeune Water Contamination lawsuit was everywhere. It was hard to turn on a TV or radio and not hear an ad seeking plaintiffs. While attorneys from across the country worked to help their clients, three Ward and Smith lawyers were trusted with strategic appointments and asked to join essential national committees.

Charles Ellis and Ret. Major General Hugh Overholt were named liaisons between the Eastern District of North Carolina and the other plaintiffs' attorneys, while Lynwood Evans serves on the Plaintiffs' Executive Committees and Law and Briefing Subcommittee. Given the breadth and importance of this litigation to the hundreds of thousands of impacted veterans and to the sense of justice involving our military, we are

honored these attorneys are involved at this very high level, working both for Ward and Smith clients and for plaintiffs nationwide.

Additionally, trusts and estates attorney Jenny Boyer was presented the Younger Lawyer Pro Bono Award by the Buncombe County Bar and Pisgah Legal Services for helping those in need, while Mike McIntyre, our Senior Advisor for Government Relations and Economic Development, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for his exemplary leadership and dedication to public service.

Mayukh Sircar, also a member of the IP team, is a cybersecurity, data privacy, and technology attorney. This year, he became a Certified Information Privacy Professional/United States (CIPP/US) by the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP). Additionally, intellectual property attorney Erica Rogers has become a North Carolina State Bar Board Certified Specialist in Trademark Law.



Ward and Smith co-founder David Ward was honored with a building dedication ceremony at Craven Community College (CCC), and many of our folks proudly attended that ceremony. In a press release, CCC President Dr. Ray Staats noted David's "faithful service" to the community college, stating, "[David] has generously served as both trusted consultant and advisor to the Board and as a professional mentor to five presidents. We are a profoundly better teaching and learning institution because of his dedication." We remain profoundly proud of David, who retired from the practice of law in 2019.

And last, but certainly not least, Retired Major General Hugh Overholt received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, North Carolina's highest civilian honor. Given at a fall North Carolina Board of Transportation meeting, the Order discussed Hugh's long service to the NCDOT. Hugh is the only person who has been appointed to the NC Board of Transportation in successive terms by a Democratic governor, a Republican governor, and a Republican Legislature. In today's climate, that's a remarkable show of bi-partisan support for Hugh's judgment, demeanor, and expertise.



Photo Credit: NC Department of Transportation

## Looking Ahead

"It's this spirit of care—of caring deeply about the issues our clients face and making sure we support them, their businesses, and their concerns—that fuels us for another successful year," remarked Co-Managing Director Devon Williams.

Echoing Devon's sentiments, Co-Managing Brad Evans added, "All of this wouldn't have been possible without our clients, staff, and attorneys, who are the driving force behind our success. We do our best for each other, as a team, and for our clients every single day. And with a wrap-up like this, I think it shows."

As we embark on a new year, Ward and Smith remains dedicated to delivering top-notch legal services with a personal touch. We look forward to serving our community, clients, and colleagues with the same passion and commitment that propelled us to where we are today.

--

© 2024 Ward and Smith, P.A. For further information regarding the issues described above, please contact Laura V. Hudson.

*This article is not intended to give, and should not be relied upon for, legal advice in any particular circumstance or fact situation. No action should be taken in reliance upon the information contained in this article without obtaining the advice of an attorney.*

*We are your established legal network with offices in Asheville, Greenville, New Bern, Raleigh, and Wilmington, NC.*