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Kimball Anderson and Karen Gatsis Anderson. Photo by Natalie Battaglia.

Duo exercises their public service passion

By Christine Kraly

Todd Belcore seemed to face money issues throughout his life. Raised by a single mother, Belcore and his family struggled, in part, by caring for a brother with special needs.

Finances from attending school to even regular dental care long weighed on him. He wanted to become a lawyer but worried about the burden of attending law school.

The 2010 graduate of Northwestern University School of Law overcame those worries and now works at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, helping people with

criminal records tackle employment issues.

"I certainly have the job of my dreams," he said. "I'm a big dreamer, so that says a lot."

Belcore said Kimball Anderson and Karen Gatsis Anderson helped his dreams come true. Last year he received the Chicago Bar Foundation's Kimball R. Anderson and Karen Gatsis Anderson Public Interest Law Fellowship.

Kimball and his wife Karen, both attorneys, help fellow lawyers with passion for public service law pursue their dreams.

CBF Executive Director Bob Graves called the Andersons "walking examples" of the fight

to make legal services accessible to all communities.

Though the couple has practiced in different legal arenas, "each is an inspiration" Graves said.

"When you put the two of them together," he said, "it's pretty amazing."

Groundwork for a life of giving

Married in 1974 and both 59 years old, the Andersons live in Chicago's Sheffield neighborhood and have three daughters, Alexis, Melissa and Sophia.

Both graduated from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1977 and went to work for law firms.

Karen joined what was then Vedder Price Kaufman & Kammholz. For about seven years, the Des Plaines native practiced employment law and general litigation before becoming in-house counsel for the Chicago Board of Education.

She guided the board in the early 1990s as it adapted to statewide changes that established local school councils and pushed for more parental involvement.

Champaign-Urbana native Kimball worked two jobs his whole life: dishwasher at the local Dairy Queen in college and attorney at Winston & Strawn.

The trial lawyer joined the firm right out of law school in 1977 and became a partner in 1984. He said being at Winston & Strawn for the past 35 years has been a “good ride. The work has been intellectually challenging,” he said, adding that he enjoys working on some of the most challenging commercial cases in the country.

Many consider Kimball among the U.S.’s top commercial litigators, representing a slew of major corporations and organizations.

He argued two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. In the 1988 case, *Harris v. Reed*, decided in 1989, Anderson represented a man convicted of murder in Cook County, seeking to overturn his post-conviction denial. Anderson won and the man’s denial got reversed.

In the 1999 case, *Shalala v. Illinois Council on Long Term Care*, decided in 2000, he represented the Illinois Council on Long Term Care. The council sued then-Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala — ultimately questioning whether the Medicare Act barred challenges to its federal jurisdiction over Medicare regulations. He lost the case in a 5-4 decision.

But Kimball’s professional triumphs involve more than the high-powered clients he represents. When the firm established a pro bono policy in 1991, he formed its first pro bono committee and appointed himself chairman — a title he still holds.

In 1996, he received a letter from an inmate at Stateville Correctional Center outside Joliet. Wilder “Ken” Berry sent 50 or so of those letters to law firms all around Illinois describing his legal plight.

In 1992, Berry, at the time a University of Chicago police officer, was convicted of

kidnapping and sexual assault. For years, he steadfastly maintained his innocence.

Armed with Winston & Strawn colleagues David Koropp and David Doyle, Kimball helped Berry win a retrial and subsequent acquittal in 1999.

In September 2000, a free Berry began working as a paralegal at Winston & Strawn.

Berry later sought — and was denied — clemency twice, most recently in April 2006. In September 2006, a judge expunged the police and court records of his case. His third clemency petition remains pending before Gov. Patrick Quinn.

Berry praised everyone who worked on his case, but singled out Kimball.

“I give Kimball the most credit, because he was the very first one who got that letter I sent to the firm in January 1996,” he said.

“He didn’t have to read it in detail. But without that, nothing else could have happened. It all goes back to Kimball in my head.”

A powerful alliance

Glaves met Kimball 12 years ago when Kimball joined the CBF board in 2000. He credits

Kimball and Karen with initiating a series of financial support programs for Chicago’s public interest attorneys.

In 2003, with Kimball as foundation board president, the Andersons donated \$100,000 to establish the Anderson Fellowship, aimed at helping abate law school debt for an outstanding lawyer pursuing a career in public interest law.

Two years later, in 2005, the couple doubled their donation for the fellowship. The award now involves a single \$50,000 scholarship each year for one recipient.

The desire to support their community — legal or otherwise — stems from childhoods exposed to the importance of contributing, Karen said.

“Both our families are very giving,” she said, recalling her parents’ active church volunteer work. “Both of us were taught by example to give of yourself, to give back.

“Then as we became financially able to do something, Kimball suggested we focus on this area of legal services.”

Karen’s father worked as a research chemist and inventor at UOP, a Honeywell company.

What inspires the Andersons?

Who mentored you early in your career?

Kimball: Edward L. Foote, Winston & Strawn partner and nationally known trial lawyer. Ed is still practicing at Winston & Strawn.

Karen: No real early mentor ... In the late 1970s, women were still not well represented. I think we weren’t by and large mentored. I think that was kind of a lack that has been addressed more.

What music do you listen to for inspiration?

Kimball: I don’t listen to music for inspiration. In fact, I generally don’t listen to music for any reason.

Karen: I love music. Barbra Streisand and live jazz concerts.

Name a person who inspires you.

Karen: Billie Jean King. She was so groundbreaking for women; women in sports and also in business.

Kimball: James R. Thompson, senior chairman of Winston & Strawn and four-term governor of the state of Illinois.

What’s the biggest change to the legal community?

Karen: To get back to a better sense of collegiality.

Kimball: The practice of law over the last 35 years has changed from that of a profession to a business.

What’s the biggest challenge in your day-to-day job?

Karen: Just maintaining a life balance and to not go overboard on volunteer work. To keep everything kind of in a reasonable amount of time.

Kimball: Keeping a sense of humor while engaging in the trench warfare of commercial litigation.



Kimball R. Anderson (right) and his son-in-law, Ray Lavko, chief paralegal for Richard J. Prendergast Ltd, stood at the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in 2011.

Her mother was a homemaker, who worked as a benefits clerk for GTE to help provide for Karen and her three siblings. Both remained very active in church activities, with her father serving on their local parish council and chairing fundraisers.

As the son of a social worker father and a nurse mother, Kimball learned at an early age about public service.

As an attorney, his work with the foundation and the city's Public Interest Law Initiative opened Kimball's eyes to the plight of public service work for meager pay, he said.

"I could see from working with those organizations that the public interest organizations, the legal clinics were having great difficulty keeping their most talented lawyers," he said. "It was virtually impossible to stay in their public interest jobs without some debt relief."

Glaves said the Andersons' fellowship contribution "had an immediate impact."

Attorneys just starting out in legal aid or other public interest groups could stem some of the harsh realities of law school bills, he said, and the Andersons' philanthropy inspired other generosity.

The Anderson Fellowship inspired six new fellowships, Glaves said, including the Sun-

Times Public Interest Law Fellowship. Karen sits on the Sun-Times fellowship committee, as well as chairs the Anderson committee, ensuring continuity between the groups and their awards, Glaves said.

Karen called the fellowship selection process "very rewarding. The best part is I'm also the one who gets to make the phone call," she said. "That's always a real thrill, to notify somebody that they're going to be getting \$50,000 to go toward their law school debt."

Miguel Keberlein Gutierrez found himself on the other end of that phone call in 2007.

"I think for a moment Karen thought I may have hung up because I was simply stunned, speechless," Gutierrez said. "But after a few seconds, I was able to tell her how much I appreciated the honor and that I took the fellowship as a new responsibility to commit long term to the work I do."

The son of a first-generation Guatemalan immigrant, Gutierrez graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 2002. He began working as a lawyer with the Illinois Migrant Legal Assistance Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago.

"I applied for the fellowship because I knew it was most likely the only chance I would

have to continue doing the work I do," he said. "Public interest positions most often do not pay a salary that allows a young attorney to dedicate themselves long term to this vital work."

He became supervisory attorney of the migrant project in 2009.

"I've been blessed to do exactly the type of work that initially led me to apply for law school, and the Andersons have made it possible for me to fully dedicate myself to continue representing some of the most vulnerable people in our society," he said. "I would not be where I am today without the fellowship and the support of the Andersons."

When Belcore talked about his fellowship, he described how he reversed roles to help provide for his mother. He described his own chance to give back.

"This fellowship also helps people who love to serve our communities to use their creativity to serve them in as many ways as they can," Belcore said.

Belcore can then focus more of his energy and concern for other passion projects, including two nonprofits he started with friends. The Chicago International Social Change Film Festival promotes social change through film and art. And, MEN — Men, Enterprising

and Networking — provides young, black men with mentors.

His fellowship afforded him the freedom to stress less about finances and more about improving his community, he said.

The Andersons did not limit their philanthropy to the foundation.

In September, the University of Illinois College of Law announced the creation of the Kimball R. and Karen Gatsis Anderson Public Interest Grant Program, established with a sizeable donation of \$250,000 from the Andersons.

Dean Bruce Smith praised the Andersons' generosity, saying their gift "advances two key aspects of our institutional mission: Broadening professional opportunities for our graduates and serving the public interest."

Kimball and Karen genuinely believe in the importance of helping skilled lawyers do public service work, said Gregory McConnell, who oversees Winston & Strawn's pro bono work.

"It's not just because he's a very successful partner at a large firm and has been compensated well," he said. "He believes in the need and what these attorneys can do and he wants to see them have their careers in a way that's not encumbered by some of the extraordinary debt."

Their beneficiaries try to remind them of their impact. Gutierrez, for one, sends the couple holiday cards with family photos, Karen said.

"It is important to me that they know how meaningful their gesture was not only to me professionally, but to my family," Gutierrez said. "They are truly amazing people and I have been blessed to receive their support both personally and professionally."

Showing fearless support

Whether it's through fellowship donations or time, Kimball's colleagues describe him as an investor.

McConnell called Kimball tenacious, saying he "takes a very personal interest in his clients. He is an intensely loyal person."

"I would consider him to be very loyal to the folks he has supported through the years and particularly the clients he's represented," he said.

Berry considers himself one of those clients.

"He gave me the same attention as if I was one of the Fortune 500 corporations," Berry said. "I never felt like I was getting watered-down legal advice. I never felt like I was a pro bono client. I was just a client."

Berry said he never asked Kimball what role he played in helping him land the paralegal position.

"I knew he had the power to either get me the job or not," Berry said. "I always wanted to be able to stand on my own two feet, as far as my legal knowledge and my legal ability."

Kimball appears to depend on that knowledge regularly, as Berry said he works mostly with Kimball's clients.

"He's come to rely on me as a go-to paralegal," Berry said. "I like that he relies on me. It feels good that he has that confidence in me."

Berry called Kimball "down to earth" and accessible. One might assume someone who has achieved such a high level of professional success would be unapproachable, he said.

"That's not him at all," Berry said.

Kimball and Karen exhibit a reserved pride when discussing any financial help they gave to Chicago's legal community. Karen speaks more excitedly about their fellows' successes than about her own monetary contributions.

Retired from full-time legal work, Karen remains busy providing legal assistance through groups like Equip for Equality. In 2008, she became a board member for the Chicago-based group that advocates statewide for disability services.

Her schedule of late filled quickly working with The Montessori Network, a group looking to establish a charter school in the Englewood neighborhood.

And when she doesn't have her hands in school plans, she's dancing them across the ivories, taking up piano lessons again after a 40-year hiatus.

"I kept saying I should sit down and play it," she said of the piano in their Lincoln Park home. "It's been really great."

For the duo, it appears never too late to learn or face a new challenge.

One searching for Kimball will more likely find him on a mountaintop than a golf course.

He and Karen have been climbing for at least 20 years, from Yosemite National Park to

Italy's Mount Etna. Rocky Mountain National Park became their favorite.

A photo on the CBF website, that also graced the front page of the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* boasts Kimball atop Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro, proudly holding a sign with the group's mission: "Ensuring access to justice for all."

Kimball thought for a moment when asked to decide the more frightening proposition: Scaling Kilimanjaro or presenting an argument before the Supreme Court.

"The Supreme Court's pretty scary," he said. "It's a challenging and amazing experience for almost any lawyer. There's a lot more fear factor in presenting before the court."

When asked about their partnership on giving, they said:

"It is wonderful that my life partner shares with me the giving-back credo," Karen said. "One motivator for me is my faith. It is an obligation to share the rewards with which we have been blessed. It is so incredibly sustaining to see the effects on the individuals we've helped. I feel like they are doing the hard part with the time and dedication they invest in their jobs. We are doing the easy part."

"We are not exactly ying and yang," Kimball said. "We are both highly competitive individuals."

Several activities become a competition, he said, from law school grades to their push for physical fitness.

"As far as complementing each other, I would say I am more the dreamer and Kimball the realist," Karen said. "We have known each other most of our lives and share a lot of intuitive feelings."

Kimball said he and Karen partner on all major charitable gifts and thoroughly discuss all options and make a mutual decision.

"My view is that after you ride the elevator up, you have an obligation to send the elevator back down for others to climb on board," Kimball said. "The emotional satisfaction of winning a big commercial case, for example, pales in comparison to the emotional satisfaction of, for example, helping a homeless client find permanent shelter and/or needed medical care or, for example, freeing a wrongfully convicted person. The personal satisfaction that comes from these 'pro bono' wins is enormous and sustaining." ■

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