

Judge Lisa Small

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Judge Small was elected to Seat 33 of Circuit Court on August 24, 2010, and assumed the bench on January 4, 2011. When I asked Judge Small how she felt about her first year on the bench, she enthusiastically described it as “beyond expectations.”

Judge Small has resided in Palm Beach County since the age of 4, after moving here from Michigan with her parents and three siblings. The oldest child in her family, she attended the public high school Twin Lakes, which is now the site of the Dreyfoos School of the Arts. While in high school, she was a member of Twin Lakes’ national-champion Debate Team and captained and played #1 seed on the tennis team.

For college, Judge Small studied at Georgetown University’s Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service where she began her path of public service as a Congressional Intern for three years. As part of the school’s Foreign Service requirements, she became certified proficient in Spanish and studied abroad at the Universidad de Madrid in Madrid, Spain.

When it came time to sit for the Foreign Service exam, Judge Small had a change of heart. After deciding that being in the Foreign Service would take her too far away from her close-knit family, Judge Small decided she would rather take the LSAT instead. She graduated from the University of Florida College of Law in 1991, and thereafter joined her father in the family practice, Small & Small, P.A., in Palm Beach. Later in 2006, Judge Small practiced law with her brother as well, when he joined the firm.

After graduating from law school, Judge Small became one of many members of the Small family who are lawyers. Judge Small’s father, grandfather, uncle, her two brothers, and several cousins are all attorneys. As a practicing lawyer for eighteen years, Judge Small focused on business litigation, real property, commercial and residential landlord/tenant litigation, construction matters, debtor/creditor matters, community association law, and probate litigation. Judge Small actually began working in her father’s law practice while she was in junior high school. Before the days of professional trial graphics, Judge Small put her model penmanship to work by making numerous demonstrative aids for her father’s hearings and trials.

Prior to assuming the bench, Judge Small was very active in the Palm Beach County and statewide legal community. Judge Small became a member of the Palm Beach County Bar in 1993, served as President of the Young Lawyers Section from 2000-2001 and served as President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association from 2003 to 2004. Judge Small served

on the Florida Bar Board of Governors, Young Lawyers Division, from 2001 to 2004, and on the Florida Bar Board of Governors from 2005 to 2011. She also served as President of the Palm Beach County Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers ("FAWL") from 1998-1999. In 2010, the Palm Beach County Chapter of FAWL honored Judge Small as the recipient of the Florida Supreme Court Justice Barbara Pariente award for her commitment to the advancement of women in the legal community, professionalism and community service.

Judge Small and her husband, Anatole, have been together for over 20 years. They married in November of 1998, and welcomed son Aiden in 2007. They have several pets, including 2 rescue cats, a Beta fish, and 2 crayfish. No dogs . . . yet. Although Judge Small and Anatole were fortunate enough to travel widely before the birth of their son, she states that since his arrival, most of their trips are to Walt Disney World.

As you can guess, most of Judge Small's time these days is spent on the bench in Family Division "FD." However, when she does have spare time, she enjoys activities such as attending her son's T-ball games, cooking, bird watching, playing tennis, following UF football, and following soccer from South America and Europe.

Judge Small states that her transition to the bench has been smooth. She explains that her smooth transition onto the bench, and into family law, is due to the sense of collegiality on the bench, and the great mentoring she has received from so many of the other Judges. Judge Small is committed to being prepared for every matter before her and being fair and impartial at all times. She notes that while she is still a "newer" Judge, she has learned a great deal, and looks forward to learning even more. Please join me in wishing Judge Small continued success in her new role as Circuit Court Judge.

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