

New Orleans CITYBUSINESS

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LEADERSHIP
in LAW

Monica Sanchez

Position: managing partner, Cochran-Latino, The Sanchez Firm

Age: 36

Family: single

Education: bachelor's degrees in economics and political science, Ohio University; juris doctor, Loyola University College of Law; master's degree in international and comparative law, Tulane University Law School

Monica Sanchez received a call about a year ago from a Hispanic mother whose 16-year-old son was in trouble with the law and was considering dropping out of school. Sanchez represented him in court several times on a pro bono basis, clearing him of all charges.

"He called me one day and said, 'Not only am I going back to school, I want to go to college now. God and life have given me a second chance,'" Sanchez said.

"I touched his life and that's why I went to law school. I wanted to help people in their time of need."

Sanchez earns a living as a personal injury attorney, as managing partner of Cochran-Latino, The Sanchez Firm, but builds her career on helping the Hispanic community navigate the legal system, focusing on simple to complex problems.

"The Hispanic population here doesn't have a voice. They need help in everything," she said, pointing out that Hispanics are at a loss in the United States because they don't know the legal system and the basic rights it affords.

"If I can make life a little bit easier for them, it's better for me. I like helping the little guy."

The bilingual attorney grew up in Panama, where her parents and siblings still live. She fell in love with New Orleans while attending law school and has since settled in a home in Lakeview.

Sanchez estimates she spends just as much time on pro-bono cases, community outreach and free legal advice as she does making money on personal injury cases, but enjoys them all the same.

"I'm very passionate about my position. I'm a very fair person. If fairness is on my side, I'll fight that to the end. It's also rewarding when you give a multi-million dollar check to someone who's really hurt."

She's handled several personal injury cases in her 10-year career and served as second chairwoman on a jury trial in 2004 that recovered \$6.4 million for the client.

Sanchez participates in one or two community outreach events a month, offering free legal advice at events such as church fairs and sports tournaments and via a radio talk show.

She considers providing quality legal help to one client at a time to be her highest goal.

"If you do the right thing for the right reason on a consistent basis, the rest will take care of itself."

One of the few Hispanic attorneys in the city, she serves as vice president of the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Louisiana, a multi-cultural group she is working to reorganize. •

— Diana Chandler

