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The Class Of 2005-2006 LI Law Firms Pick Their Newest Crop Of Partners

By Claude Solnik

For some attorneys, it's a huge vote of confidence in their abilities. For others, it's a recruiting tool that keeps them anchored to Long Island by sharing a sense of ownership. In all, more than two dozen new partners were named to Long Island's law firms over the past year, including many at the start of 2006.

"They were rewarded for their hard work and performance," said Patrick Murphy, a partner at McCabe, Collins, McGeogh & Fowler in Mineola, which named two partners, up from one a year ago. "Those are the people we have who came up through the ranks." But some also were named partner in recognition of the firm's own robust business.

"The firm had a strong growth year and those people were instrumental in the firm's growth," said Marc Hamroff, managing partner at Garden City-based Moritt Hock Hamroff & Horowitz, which named four new partners. "All four brought very different practice areas and areas of concentration. All their practice areas have grown substantially at the firm this year."

At least three dozen counselors at Island law firms were named partners this year. The rank typically brings increased pay as well as authority and some say in the firm's management and policies.

Rivkin Radler in Uniondale led the pack by naming six partners, Jaspan Schlesinger Hoffman followed by naming five partners, and L'Abbate, Balkan, Colavita & Contini, Rivkin Radler and Moritt Hock Hamroff named four.

Ruskin Moscou Faltischek; Farrell Fritz, Forchelli, Curto Schwartz, Mineo, Carlino; Scully, Scott, Murphy & Presser; and McCabe, Collins, McGeogh & Fowler all named two.

National firm Nixon Peabody named one new partner on Long Island, effective as of February, and Cullen and Dykman and Garfunkel, Wild & Travis each named one. Meyer, Suozzi & Klein took a pass after naming four last year.

While promotion to partner is part of many firms' culture, the ritual isn't universal.

Siben & Siben, a personal injury firm in Bay Shore, with nearly 60 attorneys, stuck to its policy of remaining a family business with only four partners. It didn't name any new partners this year.

Many people were named partner after seven or eight years with the same firm, but promotions aren't given based simply on tenure.

"In this business, personal injury defense, it's challenging," said Murphy. "Partners are performance-driven." Scully, Scott, Murphy & Presser in Garden City named its first woman partner, growing to 10 partners total. The firm also hired six attorneys, including two women.

Some firms said they take into account the full picture in conferring the title of partner, not just billable hours and the business a partner brings in.

Lois Carter Schlissel, managing attorney at Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klein in Mineola, said her firm factors in such things as "professional skills and client service, strict adherence to

the rules of ethics, strong work ethic and cooperative spirit."

"We also consider pro bono activities, legal publications, community involvement, bar association activities and teaching positions," she said.

How many attorneys will join the ranks of partner next year? It may be too early to tell, but some firms would like to name at least a few to that rank.

"I hope we're sitting here this time next year and we're reporting additional new partners," Hamroff said. "It only means good things for the firm." ■