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Committee Spotlight: Sara Hall

Interviews and Profiles



Sara Hall

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER & GENERAL COUNSEL

ALSAC, THE FUNDRAISING AND AWARENESS ORGANIZATION FOR ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL, MEMPHIS, TN, USA

COMMITTEE AFFILIATION: NONPROFIT COMMITTEE

Tell us about your background and your law department.

I've been chief legal officer and general counsel of ALSAC since 2010. ALSAC exists solely to raise the funds and awareness necessary to operate and maintain St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Because of ALSAC, families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing, or food.

I graduated from University of North Carolina Order of Coif with Honors in 1995 on a full-academic scholarship and began my career at Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell, and Berkowitz.

As the top healthcare charity in the United States, ALSAC employs approximately 1,300 team members who operate in 32 fundraising offices across the country. ALSAC relies on generous supporters and volunteers who make donations and support tens of thousands of fundraising activities annually to help St. Jude provide medical care to children with cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

I oversee all legal affairs, including legal issues related to fundraising, regulatory matters, trademarks/marketing, human resources/employment, estates, trusts, real estate, contracts, enterprise risk management, and insurance. Since joining ALSAC, I have restructured the legal department to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and value to the company as a business partner.

What interested you in the in-house practice of law, and how did you come to be an attorney at ALSAC/St. Jude?

I enjoy solving problems by removing road blocks and working efficiently. In-house attorneys have a unique view of the innerworkings of the organization and its departments. We can be real partners and assets if we proactively identify risks, opportunities, and challenges that are around the corner. We provide the advice and counsel necessary to help the organization navigate these challenges and effectively meet its goals.

The equity, purity, and compassion of ALSAC's mission is especially compelling to me. I am incredibly grateful to work at an organization where we empower our employees and millions of our supporters and partners to work together and save the most vulnerable in our world regardless of their financial situation.

What is the single greatest challenge that your law department is facing today, and how are you dealing with it?

Keeping up with the present and preparing for the future. The world is changing so rapidly. The proliferation and speed of technology and information makes it challenging for in-house attorneys to

understand changing business strategies and adapt our advice to new scenarios. We often apply current laws that lag behind innovation so it's important to stay abreast of new regulations that have a direct impact on the organization.

In October 2016, you were elected chair of the Nonprofit Committee? How did you initially get involved?

When I joined ALSAC, I had worked in-house for 14 years but had never represented a nonprofit. It was wonderful to be able to join a committee of in-house nonprofit attorneys and have access to ACC information and resources.

What are some of the ways that the Nonprofit Committee provides value to its members?

The nonprofit committee is a wonderful way for nonprofit attorneys of diverse backgrounds, experience levels, and organizations to discuss and learn about issues unique to nonprofits. On our last panel webinar, we heard from seasoned general counsel and obtained practical advice for working in-house at a nonprofit. We delved into the nonprofit nuisances of modern legal practice and considered new obstacles through an interactive discussion.

What substantive practice issues does your committee address?

We are excited this year to offer more opportunities for panel discussions and member engagement. Our committee sessions explore current and emerging issues that nonprofits face, such as operating internationally (whether raising funds or providing services); nonprofit brand, trademark, and infringement issues; and charitable sector influencers. We also are working on a primer on nonprofit law for our ACC in-house colleagues who are the de-facto attorneys who are interested in learning nonprofit law basics.

How has the Nonprofit Committee helped you in your career?

The ACC Nonprofit Committee has provided me with a strong network of nonprofit colleagues and a trusted site for nonprofit resources. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss difficult issues that are unique to nonprofits with other in-house nonprofit attorneys. The ACC Nonprofit Committee network has allowed me to develop a broader perspective from which I can make more educated legal decisions within my organization, creating cherished friendships along the way.

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