

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

KRIS KULLY

Partner,
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WHF Member Spotlight – September 2019

Kris Kully, Partner

Mayer Brown

Hometown

York, Nebraska

Fun Fact

I won a state-wide computer programming contest in high school.

Also, I have never seen an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie (I don't dislike him – I just have a streak going and I figure, why stop now?).

Walk me through your journey in the financial services industry and how your career has evolved to your current position.

My part-time job in college was as a bank teller in the “drive-through” – all these years later, I still straighten my dollar bills so they face the same way. My branch manager was a woman, and because of her, I've always seen the financial services industry as a great place for smart women.

After law school I joined the Office of General Counsel at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), focusing on the areas in which HUD promotes and regulates the housing finance industry. I enjoyed the intersection of housing policy and finance, and worked with and learned from many smart and dedicated lawyers and other professionals.

After six years at HUD, I joined a law firm group focusing on mortgage banking and other consumer financial products and services. The lawyers in my group advise the housing and consumer finance industry from every angle – compliance, transactional, enforcement, litigation, and structured finance and securitization. My clients range from relatively small community banks and credit unions to global financial institutions.

What do you love most about what you do?

I love a lot of things about being a lawyer in the consumer financial services/mortgage industry. Primarily, I love that almost every day, I learn something and I teach something. My clients and my colleagues are among the smartest people I've ever met, and it is a fantastic challenge to try to stay one step ahead. I've never had a boring day.

Hobby

Running, wine, travel. Traveling to places where there's good wine. Riding big, fast roller coasters with my son. Making quilts.

How long have you been a member of WHF?

I joined WHF in 2000.

Please describe your involvement with WHF.

Over the years, I have been involved in WHF in several ways. In addition to attending many of the programming events, I served a few terms as counsel to the WHF Board of Directors and to the WHF Foundation. I also then was honored to be elected as Vice President, President-Elect, and now President. Through those roles, I have served as Chair of the Programming Committee, helping to plan valuable and interesting speakers and other events. I also lead the Symposium Committee, spear-heading WHF's premier day-long event with leaders and innovators in housing and finance. I also have worked with the WHF Foundation's partners, particularly with Calvary Women's Services in DC, leading financial education courses (fun!) and throwing birthday parties (more fun!) for the residents.

What have you gained from being a member?

When I first joined WHF as a relatively new lawyer in DC, I valued the opportunity to learn about the width and breadth of the professionals in our industry. I met other lawyers, economists, journalists, consultants, lobbyists, nonprofit directors, housing specialists, secondary market investors, and congressional staff. I also was thrilled to learn that many of those experts are women! As I moved from the public to the private sector, I attended many lunches and other events, learning from high-profile speakers like Cabinet officials, senators, and even Fed Chairmen! Also, I have really valued participating in several efforts by the WHF Foundation to support local women through financial literacy and economic empowerment. Over the years, however, my favorite part of WHF has simply been the relationships. I've met so

many women and men from diverse backgrounds and specialties, who have helped me shape my professional life and have become my friends. Can't beat that!

How do you make the best use of your day? (think techniques to enhance productivity, time management, time out, meditation/prayer, etc.)

I try to get up early and exercise most days, before the chaos of work and family kick in. It helps me stay healthy, feel better, and think more clearly and creatively. Plus, after I exercise, I get to have coffee! Beyond that, like many of us, I'm sure I could learn better time management techniques – if I only had the time!

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by people who never give up, particularly when progress is uncertain, slow, and difficult.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

My mother told me I could be anything I wanted to be, if I worked hard.

Who do you look up to the most and why?

So many people, for different reasons. My mother, because of all her encouragement. Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ruth Bader Ginsburg (for obvious reasons). The U.S. women's national soccer team, because they are strong, fast, and skilled.