

RISING STAR AWARD: TERRI SEWELL

Sewell has answered the call since returning home

BY ASHLEY PIER | SPECIAL

Since graduating as the valedictorian of Selma High School, Terri Sewell was somewhat of a globetrotter before finding her way back to Alabama where she became the first African American shareholder at Maynard Cooper & Gale PC.

She received a bachelor's degree from Princeton, a master's degree from England's Oxford University and a law degree from Harvard University before working more than 10 years at a Wall Street law firm in its New York and London-based offices.

But during her traveling days, something always seemed to try to pull her back to Alabama.

"New York was never really home for me. I wanted to give back to a community that gave me so much," Sewell said.

"Life is more than just being good at your job. It's about using your talent and resources to help others."

Two years ago, Sewell moved back to Birmingham, where she has made a tremendous impact both within the community and at Maynard Cooper and Gale.

"She's been good in client development and is a terrific recruiter for young lawyers," said Frank McPhillips, one of the firm's founders and Sewell's mentor.

"She has a high profile in the community and has had a significant impact in elevating the profile of this law firm."

Sewell directs much of her focus toward educational finance.

Representing institutions including Alabama State and Tuskegee universities, she has worked to improve schools by establishing and renovating dormitories, student centers and other buildings.

"By using my financing background to work with these clients, I'm able to combine both of my passions," said Sewell, who learned the value and importance of an education while growing up in Alabama.



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After a decade on Wall Street, Terri Sewell moved home and became a partner at Maynard Cooper & Gale PC.

One of Sewell's major career accomplishments is establishing an entirely new client base after the move from New York to Birmingham.

But when asked what she is most proud of achieving since her time in Birmingham, one answer immediately comes to mind.

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Terri Sewell
Maynard Cooper & Gale PC

McPhillips. "She shows young lawyers that it's fun to practice law."

But she doesn't take what she does lightly. Through her hard work, she has helped open the door for numerous other women and minorities to follow.

"There are so many people who fought and died for me to be in this room, and the challenge is for me to stay in the room and widen the door for others to come across," Sewell said.

"It's one thing to be given the opportunity, but in the end it's what you do with it. Take that ball and run with it."

Ashley Pier is a freelance writer based in Atlanta.