



The Human Side of the Law

After joining his practice with Ward Law Offices a little more than a year ago, attorney Tony Potter is hitting his stride. The Colby native brings 23 years of experience and a deep background knowledge of Northwestern Kansas. While the practice is overseeing cases in 14 counties right now, Potter is finding more of his work coalescing around the Sedgwick County area and family law, as he handles divorces, custody and parenting issues, prenuptial/postnuptial agreements and child-in-need-of-care issues.

Potter is also enjoying working with Ward Law Offices founder Lynn Ward. “I think that Lynn and I, our practice styles complement each other,” he says. “The two of us have a different enough style and different enough approaches on cases that it really helps to bounce those ideas off of another attorney, but our core values are the same: empathy, excellence and expertise.”

The law runs deep in Potter’s family: His great-grandfather was one of the last attorneys in the state of Nebraska to actually “read” for the law. Instead of going to law school he digested a syllabus of legal texts and then sat — successfully — for the bar exam. Potter’s maternal grandfather was an attorney as well, and the two men made an impression on him at a young age.

“I can’t remember a time that I wanted to be

anything different,” Potter says. “This is something I have a passion for. I like getting up in the morning and coming down to the office and working with clients, and it hasn’t changed so far.”

SHIFTING FAMILY DYNAMICS

One of the things that keeps Potter so engaged is his focus on family law. “It really is one of the areas of law that has a broader spectrum,” he says, encompassing facets of real estate, property, finances, debt, adoption, guardianship and even criminal issues.

More and more often recently, Potter finds himself dealing with the issue of grandparent visitation. The shifting family dynamics and departure from traditional roles inspires him to find non-traditional ways to approach these cases. He lists two guiding principles that he keeps in mind at the beginning of every case.

“One of the things that we pride ourselves on is that we try to be as flexible as possible, because every case is really unique. The law is the same for every family, but every case is different.”

The second principal is a strong belief that a good working relationship between parties is the foundation of a successful outcome. Potter says there will eventually be a final decision on money and prop-

erty issues, and even basic custody matters, “But you aren’t ever finished with the kids. You’re always going to parent those kids. I think taking a more positive approach does help considerably, because that foundation is there. If you don’t have that, it’s awfully hard to build any trust between parents.”

“**Sometimes people need to understand that we can disagree without being disagreeable.**

— Tony Potter

“As the children age,” Potter continues, “these people will have to continue to co-parent and work together, as far as these children are concerned, well past the age of 18.” He explains to clients that, even though the marriage with their spouse may be terminating, “the relationship with your children — and your spouse’s relationship with your children — that connection will always be there.”