

BUFFALO BUSINESS FIRST

PHILANTHROPY & NONPROFITS

Building a Better Buffalo: Harter Secrest & Emery's John Horn develops a lifetime of service

TRACEY DRURY

Reporter, Buffalo Business First

Being an attorney and leading a law office can be overwhelming, but John Horn has figured out how to balance that with service in the community.

Horn, partner-in-charge of the Buffalo office of Harter Secrest & Emery LLP, has spent the past 15 years serving on a variety of nonprofit boards, starting with the National Federation of Just Communities, where he chaired the board, then shifting to the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

Since 2013, he has been a board member at Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute, serving on the development committee and as board president until 2021. Almost three years ago, he joined the board of the Minority Bar Foundation of WNY and was recently named to the diversity and inclusion executive council at the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

Horn grew up in a life of service as the son of a pastor, who moved the family to Buffalo in 1978 to lead First Presbyterian Church on Symphony Circle. His love of music was inherited, too: His mother ran a neighborhood violin studio.

"Serving the community was something that I feel like has been a part of my life plan for as long as I can remember," he said. "I learned that example from my parents and then when I had the opportunity to get involved in leadership positions with various organizations, I sort of gravitated to the ones where my parents had fostered connections."

Horn's father had been involved with NFJC; while his mother was a substitute violinist for the BPO, so he had been attending concerts at Kleinhans Music Hall for many years. Joining the board later in his career felt like coming home, he said.

Horn graduated from City Honors, went on to University at Rochester for college, then to graduate school and law school in Chicago at Loyola



John Horn, partner, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

University. He returned to Buffalo for a clerkship with the late U.S. District Judge John Elfvin.

"Although I was loving Chicago and fully intended to return," he said. "Once I got back here, I fell back in love with Buffalo and loved being around my family. Most importantly, I met my wife early in 1999 and there was no chance of moving away after that."

Horn also enjoyed developing relationships through both his work and his volunteer efforts.

He says the opportunity to work side by side with other people helps to counter the siloes that went up during the pandemic, when people seemed to sink even further into social media and being attached to their phones and computers.

"It's noble work, but it's also a lot of fun to get out of the house and to serve with others doing important work to make your community and

your neighborhoods and region a better place," he said. "You broaden your horizons and learn so many new things and ways of looking and listening to the world."

JOHN HORN

Day job: Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

Community: Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute; Minority Bar Association of WNY

Self-description: Joyous

What keeps you up at night: Isolation and figuring out a way for people to be more present. "People just engage less, they do fewer things with one another, so how do you build a community? It keeps me up at night."

Who is your hero: Janice, my wife of 22 years