Chief of the Month: Sarah A. E. Frasch, Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office

Each month, the Center for Consumer Protection will provide an article about an Attorney General’s Office Consumer Protection Chief.

Thank you for allowing me to highlight the great work of the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, Bureau of Consumer Protection in this month’s newsletter.

I was born in Charleston, SC and moved to the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA when I was 10, where I have resided ever since. I attended college (B.S. in Mathematics and minor in Computer Information Technology) and law school at Temple University in Philadelphia and graduated in 2006. While in law school, I interned for the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General and found the Office to be so important to Pennsylvanians, that I knew I wanted to be a part of the team permanently upon my graduation.

Immediately after graduation from law school, I joined the Bureau of Consumer Protection as a law clerk, and after passing the bar exam, I was promoted to Deputy Attorney General, where I worked as a staff attorney handling a variety of consumer protection matters for over 10 years. My most memorable experience as a staff attorney was being able to hand-deliver a restitution check to an elderly woman who had paid thousands of dollars to a contractor to redo her kitchen to be more accommodating for her injured leg, and as a result of the lack of workmanship of the contractor, the kitchen was not workable (for years). She could not use her stove or oven, could not sit at her kitchen counter, and could not have friends or family over for holiday meals or gatherings; and she did not have money to hire a different contractor to fix the problems nor could she afford an attorney to bring the contractor to court.

Besides the numerous cases in which I was able to recover relief for consumers in Pennsylvania, one of my greatest accomplishments during that time was building up the internship program within the Bureau for law students in the Philadelphia area. I find it very important to help educate the aspiring lawyers on what we do and how to be better practicing attorneys.

In August 2016, I was promoted to Chief Deputy Attorney General, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve in this capacity, and I have enjoyed the challenges, improvements, growth, and successes that come with the role. The Bureau
is composed of 26 attorneys, 34 agents, and 28 staff. We have a robust consumer mediation program, educate the public at more than 250 events each year, oversee registrations of various entities, and investigate/litigate cases involving alleged violations of local, state, and federal consumer protection laws.

My biggest focus in coming in as Chief, and continuing every day, is thinking of ways to make the Bureau more effective, efficient, and accessible so that we can assist as many people as possible in ways they cannot find elsewhere. Our Bureau has grown in size and taken on novel and more complex matters since Josh Shapiro became Attorney General, and it has been under General Shapiro’s leadership that I have had the opportunity to lead the Bureau in taking on cases against bad actors such as Navient, Equifax, and a variety of other wrongdoers in Pennsylvania. Our consumer complaint intake has gone from about 20,000 complaints a year (2016) to nearly 25,000 last year. We have gone from about $5 million in money back to consumers and Pennsylvania through our mediation efforts and legal actions (2016) to nearly $40 million last year. I look forward to continuing in my role as Chief and hope to continue our success in the years to come.

On a personal note, I am happily married for 11 years (my husband is a special education teacher who works with children with Autism), have two talented children (son who is 8 and plays baseball, ice hockey, and soccer; daughter who will be 7 and is on a dance team and is just starting cheerleading this year), and have 2 cats and a dog. I am a former dance instructor and love to cook (I never make the same dish twice).