

## Profiles In Leadership – Donna Berger of KG&B and CAN

By [Adam Sinclair](#), West Palm Beach HOA Examiner



*The thing that makes me happiest each day is driving up to our new Law and Learning Center campus in Margate, walking in the door and seeing a director, association member or manager who is a regular attendee at our classes..." Credits: KG&B*

Anyone who has ever done any research regarding association living in Florida has already heard of Donna DiMaggio Berger. As the Executive Director of the Community Advocacy Network (CAN) and managing partner of the statewide community association law firm of Katzman Garfinkel & Berger (KG&B), her name always is at the top of the list whenever anyone has a question about all kinds of legal as well as other issues regarding HOAs.

Recently, I had the opportunity to ask Ms. Berger a few questions. Her answers might give you some insight into what kind of a person she really is, and prove that she is more than just a pretty face for the law firm.

1) How long have you served in your current position?

I have been managing partner for my law firm for the past 2 years. I have served as Executive Director of our Community Advocacy Network (CAN) since 2007.

2) What is your favorite thing about your job?

My favorite thing about both of my roles is the opportunities I have each day to interact with so many different people. I've made so many close personal friendships just as a result of doing my job each day. My second favorite thing is the opportunity to chart my own destiny each day. I don't have a "boss" looking over my shoulder that frees me up to pursue ambitious paths on behalf of our Firm clients, Firm employees and CAN members.

3) When did you decide to become an attorney?

My first career choice was to be a UN translator. I speak Spanish, French, and some Greek and was starting to take Russian at Northwestern University before I decided that a career in law was what really interested me.

4) What is your favorite part about working with HOAs?

My favorite part about working with community association boards and residents is the ability to make a positive difference. The problems in HOA's are magnified by the fact that these are "living together" relationships. Even though community associations are corporate entities, when they undergo turmoil, it can become very personal. As Managing Partner of KG&B, my focus has been on our Firm living up to its motto of being committed to Community. Most of our attorneys and staff members live in common interest ownership communities and have served on their boards. How can we understand the issues that our clients face if we haven't stood in their shoes? When we hold a training course for board member certification, a manager's continuing education course or our Board Member Boot Camp(R), we have an enthusiastic team of Firm and CAN volunteers wanting to take part. There will always be problems associated with the community association lifestyle but an optimistic outlook and a willingness to roll up one's sleeves and dig in to solve problems can make the difference. I come from a very large Italian family (my dad has 90 first cousins) and I was taught early on to fight for what I believe; to stand up for others who can't stand up for themselves. There will always be detractors and nay Sayers who find it easier to tear down rather than build up. The actions have such little bearing on what I do on a daily basis.

5) What advice would you give someone interested in a career in HOA law?

I interview young attorneys all the time who think they want a career in this industry. I also deal with managers looking for jobs. The most important thing for folks looking to work in the community association industry is to enjoy being around and helping people. Strong communication skills are also an absolute prerequisite. You can be a genius but if you can't convey your message clearly in writing and orally, no one can benefit from your wisdom.

6) Is there anything else you'd like to share with the readers of the West Palm Beach HOA examiner?

The thing that makes me happiest each day is driving up to our new Law and Learning Center campus in Margate which we selected particularly for its ability to host large groups of people, walking in the door and seeing a director, association member or manager who is a regular attendee at our classes and seeing them smile and say "hi" as they walk out with their course materials and a fresh-baked cookie!

The West Palm Beach HOA Examiner would like to thank Ms. Berger for the generous gift of time for everyone's questions, and thanks her for all the help she has given in the past, and will give in the future.

Be sure to subscribe to this column, and stay abreast of issues involving you, the homeowners of Palm Beach County! If you've had any issues with your HOA that you'd like me to try and delve into, and possibly write about later, please let me know.