

# Boulder attorney office maintains family feel

*The law firm of Caplan and Earnest recently celebrated its 30th anniversary*

By Kristen Baker  
For the Camera

With his big toothy grin, deep chuckle, and warm demeanor G. Lane Earnest could quickly and efficaciously destroy many peoples' stereotype of a partner of a law firm.

Earnest, nicknamed "Ernie" by his associates, swivels in his chair like he's the happiest guy in Boulder—and with good reason. Starting as a legal clerk more than 30 years ago, Earnest has built himself a small feel-good legal empire.

Caplan and Earnest, LLC, Attorneys at Law, marked its 30th anniversary on Oct. 3. Starting with

only two partners and one associate, the law firm has grown to employ 60 people, including 27 attorneys.

"Our law firm is truly like a family," Earnest said, as he leaned back comfortably in his chair. "We look out for one another. That's the kind of environment we work in, and that's the kind of work we like to do."

Earnest describes the firm's collective clients as "critical to community vitality and well-being." Some of their most prominent and popular cases involve schools, health-care providers such as hospitals, colleges, and corporations that provide jobs as well as scientific and human resources for the Boulder area.

"There is a tremendous variety of work issues that we get involved with here," said Bill Kowalski, a Caplan and Earnest attorney who works for the Jefferson County,

Douglas, Boulder, and Thompson school districts. "We've represented the Jefferson County School District for more than 20 years. That is a lot of pressure, but it's also very exciting."

"We are on the cutting edge of law," said Susan Schermerhorn, a Caplan and Earnest attorney who works closely with Kowalski on school cases. "I find it a privilege to work within these school systems. Education is the cornerstone of our democracy."

"It feels marvelous to fall on the right side of the moral line 99.99 percent of the time. That's why I come to work everyday," Kowalski said. "We don't do any dirty work here."

Another large amount of Caplan and Earnest's cases fall into the real estate and corporate area. Attorney Mark Painter deals with law on this matter most of the time.

Please see LAW on 5F



ERIN DAY / For the Camera

Lane Earnest, center, with his two partners, Marc Painter, left, and Bill Kowalski, outside the Caplan and Earnest law firm. The Boulder firm is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

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# Law firm celebrating 30 years in Boulder

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"I come to practice law for a number of different reasons," Painter said. "We're making economic things happen, extremely interesting things. The variety that is involved is enormous... I love my job."

In addition to working with different clients for worthy causes, Caplan and Earnest attorneys volunteer their time to do pro bono work for companies that need legal help. Additionally, they simply volunteer their time to be involved in the community, such as working in homeless shelters and with Adopt-A-Family.

"We find that being a part of our community and getting to know the businesses and people who make up our community is very important," Earnest said. "We also

work closely with CU's Law School. Their faculty and students are top rate, and we really enjoy working with them."

Earnest, the voice of the annual Fourth of July fireworks display at University of Colorado's Folsom Field, sets an example for all who work for his firm, Kowalski said.

"Ernie is a role model for us in terms of community service," Kowalski said. "When someone is hired on, it is expected that they will give back to the community and get to know the citizens of Boulder. That's just the kind of firm we have."

"It's a bit unusual — we all like each other," Schermerhorn said. "We give one another emotional support and help one another out if times get tough. It's like Ernie said — we really are like a family."

# Arts on the Move

Notes and notices about PeakArts people and events

## The Importance of Being Caplan and Earnest

Community involvement is a tradition at the Boulder law firm of Caplan and Earnest. In addition to providing legal services to schools, hospitals and other local non-profit organizations, attorneys there take a hands-on approach to community participation that extends from dishing up food at the homeless shelter to serving on boards of directors of the Chamber of Commerce, YMCA and Humane Society.



Lane Earnest of the Caplan and Earnest law firm

This season, to celebrate their 30th anniversary, Caplan and Earnest is adding the arts to its repertoire of community service by sponsoring the Boulder Phil's November 3rd concert, the opening night performance of world-class flutist James Galway. "Getting a group of lawyers to agree to anything is an accomplishment," jokes Lane Earnest, co-founder of Caplan and Earnest. However, the decision to sponsor Galway's concert was unanimous among the 27 lawyers in the firm.

"Boulder is famous for its quality of life," says Earnest. "We usually think of the physical beauty of the environment, which speaks to the senses. Yet, what touches the soul is just as significant. Since the arts speak to the soul, sponsoring this concert is one way of expressing our gratitude to the community for 30 years of client loyalty."

Earnest's personal interest in the Boulder Phil began 20 years ago when he was a contestant in the Bronze Baton fund-raiser, an event in which the winner conducted the

orchestra on one piece during a concert. He didn't win, but the experience ignited his respect and appreciation of the Phil. ■

*Caplan and Earnest is just one of many businesses that support the PeakArts Association. For information about corporate sponsorships of PeakArts performances, call the Development office, 303-449-1343, ext. 112. Also, a number of corporations will match your individual donations to PeakArts, making your gift go farther. Among the companies who match donations are AT&T, BP American, Charles Schwab, Duke Energy, Exxon, IBM, Lexmark, Lucent, McGraw-Hill, Merrill Lynch, Pfizer, Piper Jaffray, Public Service of Colorado and U S West.*