

Sidney Roman: Determined To Give Back

For Sidney Roman (04) it's all about giving back. Whether it's establishing a new scholarship fund for Barry Law students, serving on the Law School's Board of Advisors, helping as his son's Assistant Scout Master or providing pro bono legal advice to the Central Florida community, Roman is determined to volunteer his time, energy and experience to help others.

Roman's dedication to giving back has been shaped by his life's story. It originated in his native Puerto Rico and continued building throughout his U.S. military service, his legal studies at UCF, his years at Barry Law School and his career path in the legal field – culminating today as owner and operator of The Law Offices of Sidney A. Roman, P.A. in Orlando.

When Roman first joined the Air Force as a young man, “the core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in everything became part of my nature,” he says. After his full-time military stint ended, he returned to college while continuing part-time in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves. After graduating from UCF with a B.A. in Legal Studies, he opened and operated his own paralegal outsourcing company. Then, Barry Law School entered the picture.

When Barry became the first law school to open its doors in Orlando, Roman says it was a natural choice for him. “Because Barry practically opened in my back yard, I was able to maximize my time and my studying since school, home and work were in such close proximity,” he says.

During his years as a Barry Law student, Roman's determination to share his time and energy also played out in his student experience. He was the founder and president of Barry's chapter of the Hispanic American Law Students Association (HALSA), a founding member of the Student Trial Advocacy Team and a Senator in student government. Additionally, along with other students, Roman participated in a memorable moment in the Law School's history ... the effort to obtain accreditation by the American Bar Association for the new law school. “I graduated with my J.D. in 2001 prior to official accreditation,” Roman says. Then, his traits of determination and persistence kicked in again. “Once Barry received ABA accreditation,” he says, “I actually returned to re-take 61 credit hours in order to earn my J.D. in 2004 from the accredited Law School.”

Those extra years seem to have further cemented the bonds between Roman and Barry Law School. “I owe such a debt of gratitude to Barry Law and such highly-qualified staff and professors,” Roman says. “I completed over 100 credit hours at Barry and feel that experience alone prepared me for the practice of law. The wealth of knowledge I was able to obtain has transferred to mastering different areas of law and gaining the respect of colleagues, other attorneys, judges and clients.”

After receiving his post-accreditation J.D. and passing the Bar Exam, Roman opened his own law firm ... growing it into a boutique firm employing multiple attorneys and offering assistance in all areas of law.

Roman also credits Barry Law School with providing new outlets for his philosophy of giving back. “I am proud to use my Barry education to serve the public. It is an opportunity that I take seriously,” he says.

For a number of years, Roman has volunteered for the Orange County Bar Association (OCBA) and the Orange County Clerk of Court. “I was the first attorney to sign up and start the Clerk's Self Help Clinic program,” he says, “providing legal advice to the community in the areas of family law and landlord / tenant cases.” As a mediator, Roman also volunteers for the OCBA in Orange and Osceola counties where he mediates foreclosure cases, County Court cases and Circuit Court cases. In December of 2015 Roman was recognized by the 9th Judicial Circuit Court for his many years of serving the Osceola

community as a volunteer mediator. Similar recognition was also bestowed upon Roman last December by the Orange County Clerk of Courts, in appreciation for his service to the community in providing legal assistance via the Self Help Center to Orange County citizens who do not have a private attorney.

Roman's very active volunteer schedule and focus on community involvement also carries over into his personal life. "I'm an Assistant Scout Master for my son's Boy Scout Troop, a black belt in karate / Tae Kwon Do, a certified SCUBA diver and a singer," he says.

During the May 2016 Barry Law School commencement, Roman achieved another milestone in his lifetime of giving back. Earlier in the year he established a new scholarship fund for Barry students ... the Sid Roman, P.A. Hispanic Law Student Scholarship. This need-based scholarship awards \$2,550 to a student who is a member of HALSA, has a minimum GPA of 3.2 and participates in either the Moot Court Team or the Trial Team. Zarina Hernandez (16) was the inaugural recipient.

And recently, Roman's giving back to Barry has risen to a new level in his role as a member of Barry Law's Board of Advisors. As a Board member, Roman says he is keenly interested in continuing to build Barry's reputation, elevate the Law School's accomplishments and "touch the hearts of students from the first moment they themselves touch Barry."

"All of us need 'heart' – and whether in sports or in life, it is a team that can often achieve what individuals cannot," Roman explains. "By working together to make sure our students have 'heart' we can all help our students complete their Barry Law School experience with flying colors!"

As a Barry Law alum, Roman also has some advice for current and future students – reflective of his own academic journey. "There are so many challenges in going to law school," he says. "Always show determination and persistence. And put them into practice every day."

Additionally, Roman feels that involvement and volunteering should play a central role in a student's experience. "Just having great LSAT scores, being accepted into law school and graduating from Barry Law is simply not enough," he says. "While in law school you need to be involved in things like Moot Court, Trial Team, student government and clinics. And volunteering in the community is an important way of giving back while also helping you to meet attorneys, judges and members of other legal organizations in the community where you will practice law."

Roman also believes that giving back shouldn't end with law school graduation. "You must continue volunteering, networking and giving back to your community," he encourages Barry Law's new graduates starting out in the practice of law. "Also, get a 'mentor' and other attorneys that you can bounce things off of to learn their opinions and how they would handle matters. Forging these relationships will tremendously increase your exposure and subsequently help increase your client base."

Finally, Roman has a message for other Barry Law alumni. "I wish everyone would have the same level of energy and enthusiasm for giving back, for working on behalf of Barry Law students, for building the school's reputation – for making a difference. I wish I could bottle it up!"

"You *must* give back," Roman stresses. "And you should put it into practice every day ... with determination and persistence."

Quite a passionate closing argument from one of Barry Law's most giving alumni.