

A photograph of two men in dark suits and ties standing in a law library. The man on the left is wearing glasses and has a serious expression. The man on the right is smiling. They are standing in front of tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. A red leather chair is partially visible on the right side of the frame.

# Parkland at Its Best

by Jerry Gomez

Society's hackneyed perception of lawyers as avaricious, self-indulgent rogues is easily defeated by men like Gary Farmer and Anthony Russo. Young, savvy, successful, yet philanthropically-oriented family men, they not only represent a welcome and refreshing image of the legal profession, but furthermore, a true image of Parkland at its best.

Emerging from distinctly different backgrounds, Farmer and Russo have forged a long-lasting friendship, which consequently, has translated into a successful business partnership. A Ft. Lauderdale native partly raised in Toledo, Ohio, Gary Farmer's path would be greatly influenced by his father's (fellow lawyer and 4th District Court of Appeals Judge). "When my dad was in law school, I took the city bus and met him on campus. I would sit in the back of the classroom and listen to the lectures. My passion for the law started at a very early age." He would follow in his father's footsteps and also attend law school at the University of Toledo. On the other hand, Russo, a New Yorker of Italian descent, attended Nova Law School. "I was inspired by my grandfather. He was an immigrant with a third-grade education, and he always emphasized on the importance of education, and most importantly, post-graduate education. He inspired me to achieve and go into a career in law."

After graduation, Farmer began practicing defense work. "After five years of doing defense work, my conscience got the better of me; my heart was on the plaintiff's side. I represented my best friend's mom in a dispute with an HMO, and from then on one could say I became a plaintiff's attorney. I have the chance to help people in

very difficult circumstances." Russo's route would be a different one. "After finishing law school, I decided to forgo looking for a job like all my friends. I immediately hung my own shingle and started practicing." He adds, "As an inexperienced attorney, I didn't like the idea of asking clients for money, I felt it better to prove myself by getting them results first, this way my fate was tied to theirs. Personal injury was the best vehicle to do that."

Both have worked on numerous community events and projects as well as on political causes. Anthony, Rotary Club of Weston's Vice-President, comments, "I feel very strong about Rotary and what it represents because it works to quench the needs of people all over the world, South Florida as well as in our local community. There is a tremendous need right here in our own communities, and I don't think a lot of people recognize that." Gary adds, "We strive every day to become even more community-oriented and involved in community service as well as in the decision-making process."

Both parents of two, Hannah and Abby Farmer, and Christopher and Amanda Russo, the similarities between the two begin to sum up. Gary is married to Stacey and Anthony to Gina- two of, if not, the, most wonderful and caring humans in the planet. All in all, the guys behind Freedland, Farmer, Russo & Sheller teach us that all in life is attainable; they've managed to create a successful law firm, have given back to their communities, and most important of all, sculpted beautiful families. Gary puts it best, "We have been able to use our experience and knowledge in order to make this world a better place for our kids." **PL**