



Young Guns

by Jerry Gomez

Society's perception of lawyers as avaricious, self-indulgent rogues is easily defeated by men like Michael Freedland 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 Weston at its best.

Emerging from distinctly different backgrounds, Freedland and Russo have forged a long-lasting friendship, which consequently, has translated into a successful business partnership. A Detroit native, Freedland was inspired and drawn to the legal field by his cousin David Krathen (as in the Honorable Judge Krathen). "My cousin David practiced law and I saw how much he benefited from helping those people who most needed his help." 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, postgraduate education. He inspired me to achieve and go into a career in law."

Molded by his mentor, Michael's future as a trial lawyer seemed pre-ordained. After graduation, Freedland opted to go work for Krathen in the medical malpractice and pharmaceutical liability fields. "David taught me to always pursue my client's interests as aggressively as possible. Since most of my clients have suffered catastrophic losses, equally important is always remaining empathetic to their plight." 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."

Freedland and Russo would meet through their philanthropic work. Avidly involved Rotarians, Michael and Anthony would cement their friendship through the organization. (In fact, their personas have become quasi-synonymous with The Rotary Club of Weston itself). Both have worked and chaired the annual Rotary Run and Golf Tournaments, as well as numerous community events and projects. On Rotary, Freedland (Rotary's President Elect) states, "At a young age, I've been blessed with a lot of success. Rotary has been a great vehicle to give back to the community. We have worked to improve lives, not only in our backyards but also all over the world. It is pretty incredible that our work in the suburbs of Ft. Lauderdale makes a tangible difference in lives all over the world." Anthony, Rotary's Vice-President, adds, "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."

Both parents of two, Blake and Ashley Freedland, and Christopher and Amanda Russo, the similarities between the two begin to sum up. Michael is married to Charlene and Anthony to Gina—two of, if not, the, most wonderful and caring humans on 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. Michael puts it best, "In the end, there's no better legacy than your children. People can construct buildings or invent things, but the legacy of our children is the most significant and transcendental of all." **WL**