

# BRING YOUR KID COURIER TO WORK



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We lawyers love to talk about the importance of “maintaining work/life balance,” but what does that really even mean? Personally, I’ve come to appreciate that “maintaining work/life balance” is not so much about segregating my personal life from my professional life as it is about trying to enjoy the way they inevitably overlap. To no small extent, my outlook in this regard has been shaped by the culture of my firm, which encourages this view of “maintaining work/life balance” in a number of both formal and informal ways. One of the more interesting of these, in my view, is our Kid Courier program.

For well over 20 years, Burchells LLP has offered the opportunity each summer for 13-to-18-year-old family members of lawyers and staffers to work at the firm as in-house couriers and general helpers, typically for a week at a time. The program provides an opportunity for

participants to get exposure to work in an office environment, earn some extra cash, and add something a little different to their young resumé. For many of them, working as a Kid Courier is their first paying job.

In the seven years I’ve worked at Burchells, I’ve seen more than a dozen children of co-workers take part in the program. It’s been fascinating to watch my colleagues’ kids learn time-management, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills in the process of couriering packages and running errands to various law firms and other downtown locations. I’m always impressed by how resourceful and knowledgeable these kids become over the course of a week or two (seriously: I’ve worked downtown nearly a decade and I still couldn’t tell you how to find the Registry of Joint Stock Companies or how to work that copier at the Law Courts).

Just as importantly, I feel more connected to my co-workers after witnessing them interact with their children on a daily basis. Regardless of firm hierarchy, we all experience the same feelings of pride, trepidation, and nervousness watching

our kids take a new step forward in life. Watching our kids take that step in the form of a new job in our very own office (where their actions are both a reflection and validation of our skills as parents) intensifies those feelings. Knowing that so many of my colleagues have also experienced those feelings has helped me appreciate how much we are really all in the same boat.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Kid Courier program also has had an impact on my relationship with my own teenage son. I’ve enjoyed watching him work hard, learn from his successes and mistakes, and grow as a person. This is nothing new. However, when he first took part in the program last summer, I found the daily commute to and from the office, the shared gossip, and the frequent trips to the Scotia Square food court gave us a new way of communicating with and understanding each other. I think he got out of the program what I hope all the participants get out of it: an understanding that work is part of life, not something separate from life; the key is to learn to embrace that fact, so you can get on with the serious business of enjoying it.

## 2018-2019 CONFERENCE DATES

### Annual Conference

Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup> and  
Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Marriott Harbourfront Hotel

### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Family Division Conference

April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Casino Nova Scotia  
Followed by a Bench and Bar Dinner

### Legal Support Staff

Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Casino Nova Scotia