

## Washington State Bar Association

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### **Meredith Gerhart Receives Washington State Bar Association Local Hero Award**

*Family law practitioner and dedicated child advocate lauded by her colleagues*

OLYMPIA, WA, MARCH 18, 2021 — The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) presented family law attorney Meredith Gerhart with the Local Hero Award in recognition of her extensive advocacy for children and volunteerism in the community.

The Local Hero Award is given to those who have made noteworthy contributions to their communities. **WSBA President Kyle Sciuchetti will present the award during the virtual Board of Governors meeting on March 18.** Gerhart was nominated by the Thurston County Bar Association.

Since arriving in Thurston County in 2013, Gerhart has helped the community through her private practice work, extensive volunteerism, and dedication to her clients, all while maintaining a professional demeanor for which she is often commended by colleagues, judges, and even opposing counsel.

“She is always cheerful, professional, courteous, respectful to parties, the court, and all staff and community stakeholders, and everyone else with whom she interacts,” said Thurston County Family and Juvenile Court Chief Judge Anne Hirsch.

Gerhart has been appointed by the court more than 50 times to represent children who are involved in dependency actions brought by the state—she has remained on some of those cases for multiple years. A judge has said of Gerhart that when she is asked for help the answer is always “yes.” Gerhart has given tens of thousands of hours of her time to help children and her community members in need. She has been named to the Washington State Supreme Court Pro Bono Publico Honor Roll for the last seven years.

Since law school, Gerhart knew she wanted to practice in family law to minimize the potential collateral damage to children involved in any court proceeding, whether directly or indirectly. She is the go-to attorney when the court needs to appoint a lawyer on behalf of an individual who is incapacitated, due to age or mental illness, and strives to proactively engage in child-centered and trauma-focused representation of some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Gerhart is the current chair of the county bar’s Family Law Section. She is a member of myriad groups and organizations such as the Dependency Transformation Project, Self-Represented Parties Workgroup at Family & Juvenile Court, Pretrial Process Workgroup at Family & Juvenile Court, Family & Juvenile Court Improvement Project, Child Family Welfare Services hiring committee, and Washington Women Lawyers.

Gerhart earned a bachelor’s from Vanderbilt University and a J.D. from Gonzaga University School of Law. She began practicing family law as a Rule 9 intern and has been an active Title 26 Guardian ad Litem for the last eight years, as well as serving as both a Litigation Guardian ad Litem and Litigation Attorney for alleged incapacitated persons and minors involved in family court proceedings and dependency proceedings.

#### **About the Washington State Bar Association**

The WSBA operates under the delegated authority of the Washington Supreme Court to license the state’s more than 40,000 lawyers and other legal professionals. In furtherance of its obligation to protect and serve the public, the WSBA both regulates lawyers and other legal professionals and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA’s mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice. For more information, visit [www.wsba.org](http://www.wsba.org).