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DAILY REPORT

A SMART READ FOR SMART READERS

PUPPY PREPARATION



ALISON CHURCH

Smith Gambrell's Kristen Lewis, right, helped Wells Fargo's Mamie Kneller sponsor two dogs for service-animal training. Story, page 5.

Lawyer gives Wells Fargo trust some bite

BANK WILL SPONSOR, through a nonprofit, the training of two pups to serve disabled people

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KRISTEN M. LEWIS has known them since they were born, but until recently the puppies she helped raise were known only as Boy 8 and Girl 3—a reference to their birth order. Their names finally were revealed at a luncheon Thursday at the Atlanta Ritz-Carlton: Jack and Tig.

Wells Fargo picked the names when the bank announced its sponsorship of the puppies to become service dogs for disabled people. The names Jack and Tig came from guard dogs the company once used while transporting cash.

Lewis, a tax lawyer with Smith, Gambrell & Russell who specializes in planning for disabled beneficiaries, was responsible for connecting Wells Fargo with Canine Assistants, the Atlanta nonprofit that will train the dogs. She met Jack and Tig while volunteering as part of her weekly Saturday night nursery duty with the organization.

Training depends on the age of the dog, but Lewis said her typical Saturday night nursery duty “involves a series of agility course challenges where we get them used to different textures under their paws, so they learn to be comfortable in any kind of environment.”

Lewis was professionally connected to Wells Fargo through Mamie Kneller, a vice president and trust and fiduciary specialist with whom Lewis has worked for over a decade. The company agreed to sponsor the dogs as a way of introducing a new trust group for beneficiaries with disabilities.

Jack and Tig will be trained for about 18 months and placed with children or adults with physical or mental disabilities. The sponsorship of \$20,000 per dog will cover the cost of raising the dogs from birth until the end of training and dog food and vet care for the remainder of the dog's lives if



ALISON CHURCH

From left: attorneys William Overman, Kristen Lewis and Bill Ballard play with half-Labrador retriever and half-Golden retriever puppies Jack and Tig at a luncheon event at the Ritz-Carlton hotel.

the recipient is unable to pay.

The Wells Fargo Special Needs Trust Group highlighted by the luncheon assigns each of its clients a trust officer who is responsible for coordinating a team of experts to administer the trust—including investment specialists, tax specialists, real estate specialists, case managers and special needs attorneys. This group, which varies according to the individual needs of the client, coordinates trust expenditures for disabled beneficiaries, including annual budgeting, life care services, home remodeling to enhance accessibility and vacation planning.

The trust group also coordinates the purchase of service dogs, which can help disabled people with a variety of tasks, including turning lights on and off, open-

ing and closing doors, pulling wheelchairs, retrieving laundry and summoning help.

“It transforms the lives of recipients who have no control and now they do,” said Lewis. “There is a wonderful social aspect of having a beautiful golden retriever attached to your wheelchair. It gives them the ability to talk about something that is universal: dogs.”

Continued on back page

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The announcement of Jack and Tig's sponsorship followed Wednesday's prime-time PBS documentary featuring Canine Assistants, titled "Through a Dog's Eyes." The subject, according to PBS, is "the human-canine bond as told through the moving stories of service dogs and the people whose lives they have changed."



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—Kristen M. Lewis,
Smith, Gambrell & Russell

Elder law and disabilities planning practices are on the rise. "It's a huge emerging area of the law," said Lewis. "When I graduated from law school in 1984, there was no such thing as an elder law class or a disabilities rights class or anything for people with disabilities. Now people coming out of law school are primed to work in this area."

Lewis estimated that there are only six estate planning attorneys in Atlanta who specialize in estate planning for special needs—a number that is quickly becoming insufficient to meet the growing demand. ☎