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The 'appellate queen' leads firm to Athena Award

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By Carolyn DiPaolo

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Thomas Cordy

Attorney Jane Kreusler-Walsh in her office in West Palm Beach.

WEST PALM BEACH — Who could resist spending a few minutes with someone known as The Appellate Queen?

That's what lawyer rater Chambers and Partners called Jane Kreusler-Walsh. Specifically, an appellate queen who is considered to be "the standard of excellence for professionalism" by peers.

And there was the cover story in *Super Lawyers*, which noted some of the big questions that Kreusler-Walsh has labored on. Among them, a case establishing that the reputation of a business could be considered an asset in a divorce case. And another that confirmed punitive damage awards must be in proportion to a defendant's worth.

At last month's Athena Awards, Kreusler-Walsh's firm was honored in the business category. The award is presented to women who make a difference in the community, excel in their professions and make the time to mentor other women.

About the award, Kreusler-Walsh said, "This is a firm award. That includes my partners Barbara Compiani, Rebecca Mercier Vargas and associate Stephanie Serafin."

As an appellate lawyer, Kreusler-Walsh said her days are filled with research, writing and editing. She appears in court at least once a month.

Name: Jane Kreusler-Walsh

Title: Partner at Kreusler-Walsh, Compiani & Vargas, P.A.

Age: 58

Hometown: I grew up in Palm Beach and now live in North Palm Beach.

Education: My law degree is from Loyola University in New Orleans and my bachelor's degree is from the University of Florida.

Family: My husband Michael, who is also a lawyer, and I have three adult children, Brian, Erin and Lauren, and two dogs, Chloe and Guinness.

About your company: My firm, Kreusler-Walsh, Compiani & Vargas, is a boutique appellate law firm. We specialize in appeals and litigation support at all levels of Florida state and federal courts. We have four lawyers and four staff.

First paying job and what you learned from it: I worked as an attendant in one of my family's gas stations. I pumped gas, checked the oil, washed windows and worked as a cashier. I learned the importance of a strong work ethic and knowing and understanding each facet of a business.

First break in the business: I got my first break when Judge Downey hired me as a law clerk at the Fourth District Court of Appeal shortly after I graduated from law school.

Best piece of business advice you ever received: It takes a lifetime to build a reputation and only a few seconds to destroy it.

What you tell young people about your business: Never compromise your integrity and never litigate on principle. Find a mentor and get involved in the community.

A cause that you are passionate about: I have two: Our firm has a very close association with Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach. We've been recognized for our pro bono work on behalf of abused and neglected children. We focus on children because they don't have a voice. And Brain Tumor Research in Neurosurgery at the University of Miami. My mother (Jane C. Kreusler) died about a month ago, and we asked that donations be sent there.

Power lunch spot: Pistache on Clematis Street in West Palm Beach and 264 on County Road in Palm Beach.

Where we'd find you when you're not at the office: Riding bikes with my husband.

Favorite smartphone app: Pinterest

What is the most important trait you look for when hiring? I look for attorneys who have clerking experience at an appellate court and who are hard-working, smart and conscientious.