

# LEADERS IN THE LAW 2020

## Anna Baird Choi

Nichols, Choi & Lee, PLLC



**A**nna Baird Choi focuses her practice on administrative and regulatory law. She served as the first law clerk at the N.C. Office of Administrative Hearings, and she was an assistant attorney general at the N.C. Department of Justice before joining Jack Nichols and Catherine Lee to form Nichols, Choi & Lee in 2016. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics and political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a law degree from Campbell University. Since 2002, Choi has served as counsel to the N.C. Licensing Board for General Contractors.

### **Who was an important non-family mentor in your life and how did this person impact your career?**

Though not a mentor per se, Bill McCullough was a quiet and constant influence as far back as I can remember. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I even knew he was a lawyer; I thought he was simply the nice dad who lived next door to my grandparents. As I grew older and entered the practice of law, I had the opportunity to know him better professionally and thus gained a deeper appreciation of his work ethic, humility, and faith. Through Bill, I gained an awareness and understanding that clients, opposing parties and their counsel, and especially colleagues should all be treated with respect.

### **How does leadership in the legal field differ from leadership in other fields of endeavor?**

I think it's very similar to most other fields of endeavor. Whether a restaurant manager, teacher or priest, doing one's job well requires relevant knowledge, preparation, and the ability to communicate and connect with others, all key traits for a successful lawyer.

### **What do you consider your biggest personal accomplishment and why?**

Since graduating from law school 26 years ago, I've learned that it is important to have a focus other than on myself or my work. Thus, I have worked diligently to make a difference in my community through work with various nonprofit organizations, whether law related (Wake County Bar Association and the Campbell Law Alumni Association) or community-based such as the Junior League of Raleigh and the Daughters of the American Revolution. In a profession often focused on the number of verdicts, decisions and opinions in one's favor, I consider it an accomplishment to focus some of my energies – and try to share with others – that it's not always about “you” and “me.”

### **What has been your biggest career challenge?**

My biggest career challenges have occurred during career moves -from state government to private practice, switching law firms, and most recently when I started my own firm. I am not a risk-taker by nature so each of these changes was met with much worry and contemplation. However, with each event, the next change became easier to process and I don't regret any of them.

### **What are two facts about you that most people may not know?**

I love to tap dance and I briefly considered majoring in music -- as a bassoonist.