



Klenov, 12, the day he took the entrance exam for the John Burroughs School in St. Louis (left); in Russia with his first grade class (above); and with his sister and a Ronald McDonald statue the year they arrived in the U.S. (right).

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Thanksgiving with a Bulgarian turkey recipe. My ties remain strong, as I went back most summers growing up to visit my grandparents. I also did a legal internship in Bulgaria before I started practicing here.

Klenov: We quickly closed the door to Russia. There is a decent Russian population in St. Louis, but my mom made a conscious decision to avoid it. We didn't have a large extended Russian family, and the circumstances under which we left ... my mother was happy if we forgot the language existed. Even into my teens, if somebody called the house and hung up, my mom would think someone was coming for us. I do love the cultural aspects of Russia: the literature, the composers, the ballet.

The Law

Sun: I started doing criminal defense work for a lawyer I met through the Asian American Bar Association. He was not Asian—he was a white man interested in Asian culture. He became somewhat of a mentor, and asked me, "Why don't you just start your own practice?" I wouldn't have dreamed of that. I said, "I don't know anything. How can I do that?" He helped me, and I now have a purely solo shop doing immigration work. I can understand my clients' journeys, and they can understand me.

Samuels: The law was something I was always interested in, but wasn't sure of a way in. It started when I was as an undergraduate economics student, with a guy I happened to sit next to at an antitrust meeting. He worked for Coca-Cola, and he helped me find an IP internship at the company. Now I work in brand protection litigation.

Keaney: You have two choices as a little Bulgarian kid: doctor or lawyer. I wanted to go into medicine, but found out very quickly that that was not for me. So I tried law school, and it was absolutely the right thing.

Klenov: I gravitated toward the law because I'm naturally inclined to be a reader, analyzer, and writer. I'll never forget studying for the bar. I was always the kid who could get an "A" after putting in a third of the time others did. The bar exam was the first time I thought, "Oh, shit. I *cannot* fail." I panicked. I got lockjaw and couldn't open my mouth for days. Then, once I knew I passed it, I immediately took three more [in other states].

Samuels: Something I'm passionate about is diversifying the law. I was at a conference recently and said to colleagues, "When you hear 'Joel Samuels', you may not envision an Indian guy born in India." Assumptions like that make me want to do my part to work toward a more diverse bar, and to that end, I'm part of a wonderful program called the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, which helps connect and support diverse attorneys from across the legal spectrum. It's not always the big things that will move the needle. There are a lot of people who do great work. But it's also taking the time to simply extend the hand to bring others up with you.

Advice They'd Give Themselves

Klenov: "One day, it's going to be OK." We went through some bad stuff. There was a period of years where I wasn't really sure where I was gonna end up. When I look back ... I had a lot of anger as a teen, and I could have ended up as a criminal if it weren't for my mom and for my education. Toward my later teens, I found a balance and some peace that set me on the right path.

Keaney: "Don't be afraid of new people. Be confident." And while I wouldn't have understood this as a child, I think I would have said to lean into this kind of dual identity that I hold. It wasn't easy to come to terms with, but I appreciate it fully.

Samuels: The one thing I will never have to tell myself is to be grateful. The butterfly effect means a lot to me. One little thing—one flap of a wing—could have changed the course of my entire narrative. Knowing that makes me incredibly thankful for this life.

Sun: "Don't be scared. The sky is the limit. America rewards hard workers, so just do the work." Sometimes I look back and realize things I could have done differently. And if I had veered in a different direction, in America there is the space for that; you don't really have to stick to what you learn. America is an open door if you are only brave and willing to try. I think of some people in China who have one path, one job, one purpose. And I am glad I chose the open door. 🌍

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THE ANNUAL LIST BY PRIMARY AREA OF PRACTICE

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Names and page numbers in **RED** indicate a profile on the specified page. Phone numbers are included only for attorneys with paid Super Lawyers or Rising Stars print advertisements.

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RISING STARS

Bell, Stephanie, Ellinger Bell, Jefferson City MO

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

SUPER LAWYERS

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Blumenthal, Thomas M., Paule Camazine & Blumenthal, Clayton MO

Coopman, Amy L., Bridge Mediation, Shawnee KS

Diekemper, Jerome A., Jerome A. Diekemper, St. Louis MO

Doran, David W., Attorney at Law, Springfield MO

Eischens, Joseph K., Eischens + Vogel Mediation Solutions, Parkville MO

Frankel, Leonard J., Frankel Rubin Klein Payne & Pudlowski, St. Louis MO

Freed, Alan E., Paule Camazine & Blumenthal, Clayton MO

Geigerman, Michael S., United States Arbitration & Mediation (USA&M), St. Louis MO

Haberstock, Simone A., Law Office of Simone A. Haberstock, Richmond Heights MO

Kirn, Kim, Kirn Mediation, St. Louis MO, 618-791-8491

Litz, Robert D., United States Arbitration & Mediation (USA&M), St. Louis MO

McCarthy, Kay, Kay L. McCarthy Law & Mediation, Overland Park KS

Mitchell, Ron, Ron Mitchell Mediation, Joplin MO

Neuner, Jr., Francis X., Neuner Mediation & Dispute Resolution, Clayton MO

Palmer, Jerry R., Palmer Mediation, Topeka KS

Rute, Larry R., Associates in Dispute Resolution, Topeka KS, 785-357-1800 **Pg. 58**

Sanders, Jr., William H., Sanders Warren & Russell, Overland Park KS

Shurin, Leland M., Shaffer Lombardo Shurin, Kansas City MO

Sorensen, Diane H., Morris Laing Evans Brock & Kennedy, Wichita KS

Vogel, David C., Eischens + Vogel Mediation Solutions, Parkville MO

Warren, Roger W., Sanders Warren & Russell, Overland Park KS

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Brad Winters, a founding member of JAMS St. Louis practice, has over 40 years of litigation experience and two decades of mediation experience. Brad has served as mediator in hundreds of cases across the country, including civil rights, construction, intellectual property, personal injury, class action, discrimination and complex commercial cases. He relies on careful preparation and decades of litigation experience representing plaintiffs and defendants to help parties find elusive settlements.