

NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

Meet Kevin Kampschror:

Former Performer Uses Stage Skills and Network of Mentors to Advocate for Clients

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When Kevin Kampschror first moved to Las Vegas in 1996, he sought to further a career in live performance. Having visited the city while playing competitive tennis in high school, he was charmed by its warm weather and palm trees, which was a stark contrast to the climate in his hometown of Glendive, Montana. With training in theater as a professional singer, Kampschror used his powerful voice to entertain visitors. He also attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and earned a bachelor's degree in hotel administration.

Unfortunately, the tragedy of 9/11 marked a downturn in the hospitality and entertainment industries with a significant decline in travel, causing Kampschror's employer to lay off workers. At a moment in his life between jobs, he took the time to reevaluate his career goals just as another powerful voice served to inspire him to consider becoming an attorney.

That voice belonged to Mary Ellen Attridge, an attorney with the San Diego Public Defender's Office. In 2009, she was defending a man accused of killing a surfer in a high-profile case in La Jolla, California, that would come to be known as the "Bird Rock Bandits" case. Recalling watching the trial on TV, Kampschror said, "She



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was just so powerful ... everyone was stunned." Amazed by the passionate closing argument that Attridge gave during that trial, Kampschror took the LSAT and was accepted to the Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego.

While in law school, a networking event put Kampschror on the path to practicing criminal law – by meeting the very attorney who inspired him in the first place. Attridge attended the event, and she introduced herself to Kampschror there. They formed a connection, and she became one of Kampschror's lifelong mentors. "She was instrumental in getting me into [an] internship at the public defender's office and my success," he said.

Ultimately, Kampschror served five internships for the San Diego Public Defender's Office, including internships for juvenile delinquency, adult felonies, and major cases. Trial practice allowed him to utilize his performance skills, and he enjoyed the ability to use his drama background in the courtroom, as well as the opportunity to work on challenging and high-profile cases.

When Kampschror applied for a post-bar position in that office, however, many other candidates were selected, which came as a surprise to him. Although this was not Kampschror's first experience with possible discrimination

due to his status as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, he hadn't expected to encounter it in the practice of law.

"When I was in San Diego, I found out that the [legal] industry is not necessarily a progressive industry and certainly needs a lot of work," he said. "Now that was 10 years ago, and I think the industry has recognized [the problem]."

Kampschror also stated that the San Diego Public Defender was recently successfully sued by an attorney who also claimed that the office retaliated and discriminated against him as an LGBTQ+ attorney.

After being told he would not be hired for a position in San Diego, Kampschror came back to Las Vegas and turned to the network he'd formed there for help and advice. Among those mentors was attorney Leo Flangas, who offered Kampschror contract jobs and referrals for more legal work. Another of Kampschror's mentors, former federal public defender Franny Forsman, also helped build his network of professional referrals.

In Las Vegas, Kampschror has worked on criminal cases as well as for social security, personal injury, and workers' compensation clients. He is now a partner at Shook & Stone and has served as the division head for the firm's workers' comp division.

Part of what Kampschror enjoys about workers' compensation is networking and collaborating with Nevada's small, tight-knit, and collegial community of workers' comp attorneys. In 2014, he joined the Nevada Justice Association (NJA), and working with that group, he and others have been successfully able to work with the Nevada Legislature to improve the body of workers' compensation law in the state. As a result of his contributions, the NJA recently honored Kampschror with its 2023 Rising Star Award for an attorney working in southern Nevada.

In addition to volunteering for the NJA, Kampschror serves as chair for the State Bar of Nevada's LGBT Section, an organization he joined when it was first formed in 2013. As chair, Kampschror said his goal is to increase the section's activity, especially by providing quarterly CLEs in partnership with other organizations, such as Nevada's affinity bar associations. The State Bar of Nevada recently recognized the LGBT Section as the 2023 Volunteer of the Year for its first-place win in the Section Pro Bono Challenge. Kampschror accepted the award on the section's behalf at the state bar's 2023 Bar Conference.

He also strives to use his voice as a resource for other members of Nevada's underrepresented communities. Kampschror is Jewish, and since 2017 he has volunteered for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a nationwide organization that strives to stop antisemitism. In addition, he is a member of the

Federal Club for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an advocacy group for the American LGBTQ+ community. According to both groups, online hate speech¹ and discriminatory legislative changes² are on the rise.

Kampschror agrees, and notes that he recently encountered online hate speech himself. Motivated by his role as LGBT Section chair, Kampschror opted to start an online conversation in response to this experience through blog and social media posts, and he hopes that his approach will serve as a model to others who find themselves targeted by discriminatory speech.

His approach includes writing responses that are "... factual, not emotional," he said. "It's very difficult to do, but you have to be factual." He also recommends evaluating your goals for the conversation before starting, and having a clear idea about what you hope to achieve. And finally, he said, discuss your goals and your response with a colleague before distributing it.

That process has applications beyond responding to online discrimination. Kampschror notes that the same approach can lead to more civil interactions with fellow attorneys—something he believes is an important factor to improving attorney wellbeing.

"Let's face it, [in]civility is often personal," he said. "It adds another layer to the personal problems that are already there. The legal profession provides plenty of stress on its own that you can't escape." Civil behavior can reduce those pressures, as does the ability to be oneself in the workplace, he observed.

When not working or volunteering, Kampschror enjoys being physically active, traveling, and visiting Lake Mead with his boyfriend. They are currently planning a return trip to one of Kampschror's favorite destinations: Mykonos, Greece.

ENDNOTES:

1. <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/online-hate-and-harassment-american-experience-2023>
2. <https://www.hrc.org/campaigns/national-state-of-emergency-for-lgbtq-americans>



Members of the Anti-Defamation League's ACT national commission pose at the Never is Now Conference in New York City in November 2022.



Tyrone Widjaja (left) and Kevin Kampschror attended the Human Rights Campaign's Las Vegas gala at Caesars Palace in May 2023.



Kevin Kampschror received the Nevada Justice Association's Rising Star: South Award at the NJA Gala's at the Four Seasons.



Kevin Kampschror enjoys a waterfront networking dinner with his mentor, Mary Ellen Attridge.



John Shook (left), Leonard Stone (center), and Kevin Kampschror attended the Anti-Defamation League's Judicial Mixer Celebrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in April 2022.