

# In Memoriam: Tamara Lynn Hjelle Olsen

**July 06, 2011**

It is with great sorrow that all of us at Gray Plant Mooty feel the loss of Tamara Hjelle Olsen, who joined GPM in 1986 fresh out of Harvard Law School and went on to become our firm's first female managing officer. Tamara died on July 4, 2011, after a courageous year-long battle with cancer and will be dearly missed by her loving family and friends, her second family here at Gray Plant Mooty, her clients, and her colleagues in Minnesota's legal, business, and higher education communities. While Tamara's 51 years on Earth were far too few, her accomplishments and contributions to the community were many.

Tamara was a dedicated and insightful lawyer. After co-editing the Harvard Women's Law Journal, Tamara joined GPM as a summer associate in 1985, then came on board full time in September 1986 as an associate in the firm's Litigation group. She helped launch the firm's Employment practice in 1992, was elected to the board of directors in 1994, launched the Higher Education practice in 1999, was named vice president in 2005, and elected managing officer and chair of GPM's board of directors in 2007. Tamara's professional honors and recognitions were numerous, and included being named one of Minnesota's leading employment attorneys by Chambers USA and Super Lawyers, one of Minnesota's Top 100 Women Super Lawyers, a Women in Business Industry Leader by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal, and a recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award from Minnesota State University-Moorhead, where she received her undergraduate degree in 1982.

To give back to the community, Tamara and her family traveled on a mission trip in 2001 to Hazel Green, Kentucky, where they painted and repaired local homes and churches. Tamara was also a regular contributor to pro bono legal efforts and she co-taught a course, entitled "Women and the Law," at the University of Minnesota in 1993. Tamara also served as an elder at Hope Presbyterian Church and served on the board of directors of People Incorporated and the board of trustees of Dunwoody College.

Beloved daughter, wife, mother and friend, Tamara was born in Wadena, MN to Donn and Shirley Hjelle on May 4, 1960, and is survived by her husband of 31 years and high-school sweetheart, Michael; children, Corbin and Johanna; father Donn and his wife Ann (Alexandria, MN); sisters Deirdre Hjelle (Eden Prairie, MN) and Mara Hjelle (Alexandria, MN); and brother, Dr. Tony Hjelle (Rhineland, WI). Tamara was preceded in death by her grandparents; mother, Shirley; and daughter, Maren (1988-1989).

Visitation will be held on Thursday, July 7, at Gill Bros Funeral Home, 5801 Lyndale Ave South, Minneapolis, 4-8 pm. Memorial service will be held at 2 pm on Friday, July 8, at Hope Presbyterian Church, 7132 Portland Ave, in Richfield. Memorials may be directed to People Inc. and Dunwoody College.