suburban life

People of the Year
pg. 50

+ Also Inside:
Best of the Main Line, top chefs, and more



As a family law attorney and a community leader, **Susan M. Gibson of Gibson Family Law** strives to guide others toward a better, brighter future.
page 40

SUBURBANLIFEMAGAZINE.COM

by **Bill Donahue** | photos by **Jody Robinson**

2023 WOMEN OF THE YEAR suburbanlife



Lighting a Path FORWARD

As a family law attorney and a community leader, **Susan M. Gibson of Gibson Family Law** strives to guide others toward a better, brighter future.

Ask attorney Susan M. Gibson about the work she does, and she might describe herself as an advocate, a collaborator, and a problem solver.

"It may sound simple, but my goal is to help people succeed," says Gibson, the founder of Gibson Family Law in Doylestown. "I want to be there for them when they feel vulnerable, and to help them deal with the obstacles they face so they can move forward with their lives."

Gibson seemed destined for a career in the legal profession. Even when she was a young girl, "it was always assumed" she would grow up to become an attorney. She came from a family of lawyers, after all, including a grandfather who served as in-house counsel for a large company and also ran a

> ***My goal is always the big picture, and to help people make decisions that will best serve them going forward."***
>
> —Susan M. Gibson, Gibson Family Law

small practice for adoptions.

Gibson went on to receive her Juris Doctor from the Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. While there, she served on the school's Council of Professional Conduct for three years, and ascended to the council chair in her final year. She also satisfied her fascination with human behavior by studying psychology—first at Loyola University in Chicago, where she received her undergraduate degree, and then at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, where she earned a master's in forensic psychology.

"I saw the legal profession as an opportunity to work with people who wanted to better their situations," she says. "Life experience led me into a career in family law. I wanted to use my time and expertise to help people overcome life challenges."

She spent more than a decade honing her craft with reputable law firms throughout the Philadelphia area, helping clients navigate domestic matters such as divorce, custody, child support, equitable distribution, and spousal support, among others. Although she received tremendous satisfaction from the client-facing aspects of her work, she came to realize she wanted to do things differently. The desire for change ultimately compelled her to branch out on her own.



Since opening its doors in June 2021, Gibson Family Law has grown steadily. She and Christian Zamora, her trusted paralegal, work closely together to provide responsive service in an environment of genuine compassion.

"I've always been able to connect with my clients, but I wanted to have a culture in which helping people came first and foremost, not the bottom line," she says. "I take a collaborative approach, where we work together to help each person solve a life problem in a way that makes them feel valued and cared for. I also wanted to create a workplace culture where everyone feels seen and heard, and has a good balance between their work and personal lives."

When asked about how clients would describe her, Gibson uses terms such as *tenacious*, *caring*, and *a strong listener*. All three, she believes, are essential to guiding clients onto the path to stability and growth once the proverbial dust has settled.

Gibson has a keen interest in helping members of the LGBTQ+ community. She describes herself as a proud member of the National LGBTQ+ Bar and Bucks County Bar Association.

"I have a real soft spot for vulnerabilities," she says. "If I see a vulnerable population or person, it's the core of my being to want to protect them, help them, and fix their situation. This community is very vulnerable to attack right now, and it doesn't sit well with me when someone is marginalized and being taken advantage of."

Her words speak to the beating heart of U.S. law—the notion that *everyone* should be treated equally.

"No matter who you are, if you are in an unhappy relationship, you should feel empowered to live your life and feel good about it," she says. "The process of getting divorced is not a great process—no one wants to go through a divorce or separation—but you should have the freedom to be who you are and pursue the life you want."

Originally from the Atlanta area, Gibson has adopted Doylestown as her home. She is proud to serve her fellow residents of Bucks County, where she and her husband are raising their four children. She wants her kids to grow up in a community of fairness and diversity, which is why she has worked so hard to make a difference in ways apart from her law practice.

Education holds a particularly special place in her heart. She has served on Doyle Elementary School's Home and School Association, volunteering her time at school events and in her children's classrooms. Also, recently she ran for—and was elected to—a position on the Central Bucks School Board. As a school board director for Region 8, she says she aspires to collaborate with teachers and school staff, and uplift a district that has "gone through a lot" over the past few years.

"Community involvement matters," she says. "It feels good to be walking around in our small town and share a connection with almost everyone around you. My husband's cousin jokes with me about being 'her Kevin Bacon of Doylestown' because I seem to have a connection to most people she knows."

As for her law practice, Gibson looks forward to extending her reach to help more people contend with some of life's most challenging situations. She has the following words of comfort for anyone who has considered divorce as a regrettable albeit necessary step but chooses to stay in a bad situation out of fear: "Everything will be OK."

"The path does not have to be as treacherous as they think," she says. "I take fear into account with every client I talk to. My goal is always the big picture, and to help people make decisions that will best serve them going forward. I also try to 'keep the heat down,' which is an approach I learned from one of my early mentors. I'm always going to advocate for my client's legal position, but fanning the flames is not going to serve anyone's interests." ■

Gibson Family Law
54 E. Oakland Ave., Suite 3C
Doylestown, PA 18901 | (267) 337-6524
www.gibsonfamilylaw.com