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## Pa.-Based Chartwell Law Offices Adds Location in Miami

BY ZACK NEEDLES

*Of the Legal Staff*

Valley Forge, Pa.-based Chartwell Law Offices has kicked off 2011 with a new office in Miami.

On Jan. 3, the 66-lawyer firm brought aboard Miami-based attorneys Jerome A. Pivnik and Caroline Nitsche Carlson, who previously practiced as litigation boutique Pivnik & Nitsche, in an effort to build a presence near the Gulf Coast and Latin America.

Chartwell Chief Executive Officer Clifford A. Goldstein said positioning the firm in South Florida is important because of “the increasing volume of work we’re doing in Latin America and South America in the insurance business.”

“Miami is an important connection for that kind of work,” he said.

According to Goldstein, the firm believes it can carve out a niche handling work for the London insurance market in South Florida.

“We have some nice contacts with the major London insurance market and, believe it or not, it’s a relatively small club of claims

professionals, risk managers and lawyers who focus on major property losses [such as] energy facility explosions and massive natural disasters,” he said. “We’ve invested a lot of energy and money in shoring up relationships with major markets in those areas and have assembled quite a group of experts in the field from all over the place.”

Goldstein explained that by physically setting up shop in Miami, the firm becomes a more sensible option for London-based insurers, which typically hire an expensive New York firm that ends up subcontracting the work to a Florida firm anyway.

Goldstein said the majority of the insurance defense work the firm has done in those regions has centered on property and disaster insurance coverage.

“A lot of that work tends to be in the Gulf Coast, the Caribbean and Latin America,” he said.

Pivnik said his firm has clients in Argentina and that Carlson is fluent in Spanish.

In addition to property insurance work, Pivnik and Carlson specialize in casualty insurance defense

as well as commercial and employment litigation.

Goldstein said a mutual client in Miami put Chartwell in touch with Pivnik & Nitsche and the two firms turned out to be a nice match.

“I think the thing that intrigued us the most was their individual personalities,” he said. “Sometimes when you look for laterals you make the mistake of only looking for books of business. Not that that’s not important, but we found these people to be very personable and very marketable.”

Goldstein said Pivnik and Carlson, who have practiced together for more than 20 years, do bring significant client books to the firm but added that Chartwell is interested in building their practice.

According to Goldstein, Pivnik & Nitsche fit with Chartwell’s approach toward expansion, which often involves looking for “smaller firms that are doing fine but could be doing a lot more.”

“Their mindset is different than the Chartwell mindset because they’ve been practicing for so long and they’re sort of happy and

content with what they do,” he said, but added that the firm approached them about “breaking out of that mold” with additional clients and attorneys. “I think we caught their ear.”

Pivnik said that, after meeting with Goldstein and other attorneys at Chartwell, he and Carlson decided signing on with the firm could be beneficial to both parties.

“They have clients that have work in South Florida that they hoped to expand in and we’re a small firm in Miami so we thought it would be helpful to have the added resources,” he said.

Goldstein said one of the next goals for Chartwell is practice area expansion in Miami and the firm has its sights set on building up maritime and cargo practices in the region as well as expanding its general liability capabilities to include everything from products to medical malpractice work.

Consultant Joel A. Rose said a number of the firms he works with that have insurance defense practices in Florida focus heavily on medical malpractice because of the state’s large senior population.

“There are also a lot of nursing homes and a number of our clients have beefed up insurance defense work on nursing home care,” he said.

Rose is a regular columnist for *The Legal*.

As Chartwell continues to increase its practice depth, it is also hoping to increase its ability to cross-sell services, Goldstein said.

“A lot of people talk about cross-marketing, but I think we have the right mix to do it,” he said.

According to Goldstein, part of having the right mix involves having a menu of practices that are related but different enough to facilitate cross-selling.

But there’s more to it than that, he said.

“More than the practice areas, unfortunately or fortunately, it comes down to the people,” he said, explaining that often attorneys at other firms are not encouraged to share work with their partners. “We’ve made it a practice of adding people who have learned how to share and our success is based on these synergies.”

Rose agreed, saying firms that overemphasize revenue from personal production tend to breed cultures in which lawyers hoard work.

Conversely, firms whose compensation systems allow for the sharing of origination credits often have an easier time getting their attorneys to cross-market, according to Rose.

“What you pay partners to do, they’re going to try to do,” he said. Goldstein indicated that Chartwell is currently focusing more on

expanding the practice capabilities of existing offices rather than adding more locations.

The firm has enjoyed significant geographic expansion over the past two years, opening offices in Orlando, New York City, Medford, N.J., and Wilmington, Del., to supplement its existing locations in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Scranton, Valley Forge and Philadelphia.

Goldstein said the firm may also eventually open an office in northern Florida “if it makes sense.”

But for now, the goal is growing in Miami, he said.

“My guess is that the office will expand fairly quickly with additional laterals that will continue to feed into synergies from other offices,” he said. •