







# THE LAW OF *generations*

HOW A THREE GENERATION NJ LAW FIRM HAS REMAINED A PILLAR  
OF COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR BETTER THAN 80 YEARS

BY JESSICA JONES-GORMAN • PHOTOS BY VINNIE AMESSÉ

**“My grandfather, Leon Anshelewitz, started this firm** in 1929 with his partner Max Barr,” Mitchell J. Ansell noted, describing the family firm’s Asbury Park beginnings. “Back then, lawyers were general practice, so my grandfather and his partner did it all: closings, corporate matters...personal injury. But as law evolved, those areas became highly specialized and so did the firm. Today we have 38 different partners and associates, each with a very specific focus, which allows us to cover basically every area of law.”

Now based in central New Jersey with offices in Ocean and Clifton and a New York satellite in White Plains, the firm of Ansell Grimm & Aaron features a long roster of experienced attorneys, highlighted by three generations of the Ansell family.

“In the 1960s, my father David Ansell and uncles Robert and Richard became partners in the firm, and in the 1990s, myself, my sister Allison and my cousin Brian Ansell came on board too, followed by my cousin Michael, who joined the firm a couple of years ago,” Ansell said with appreciable pride. “Growing up, this is what we knew and I admired what my grandfather and father did for people. Not to say that my career in law was predestined, but it was a natural fit and honor to carry on the tradition.”

The firm now includes individuals who have served the community and the State in various capacities, from a Yale Law adjunct professor to a State Senate Majority Leader to a justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court. The firm’s attorneys have also secured inclusion in the list of New Jersey Super Lawyers 38 times since 2005, an honor awarded annually to less than five percent of all attorneys in the state.

Ansell, who earned his B.A. from Syracuse University and his J.D. from The Dickinson School of Law, is currently a partner with the firm, and chairman of its Criminal Defense Department. He has served as president and trustee of the Monmouth County Bar Association, was a member of the District IX Ethics Committee, and has served as a municipal court prosecutor for Sea Bright, Colts Neck, Manalapan, and Keyport. He has also served as borough attorney in Englishtown and as Manalapan’s public defender. He currently concentrates his practice in the areas of criminal defense, municipal court defense, and municipal law.

“I chose criminal defense because, for me, there is a huge reward in being able to help people during a difficult stage of their lives,” Ansell explained. “Many people come to us in the midst of unfortunate issues with substance abuse and have the enormous challenge of getting sober and turning their lives around. Knowing I can help them change their lives for the better is the most fulfilling part of this profession. I’ve been doing this for 25 years and to this day, I look forward to coming into work...I simply love what I do.”

A large part of Ansell’s professional dedication is witnessed in his community involvement. The firm is involved in a wide range of charitable efforts, and Ansell serves as a member of both the Count Basie Theater’s Foundation Board and Prevention First’s leadership cabinet.

“There’s a lot of buzz in the community about Count Basie as they expand and continually contribute to the culture of Red Bank,” he observed. “What they do there is unbelievable and we wanted to support them completely. Prevention First is also



## MY TOWN

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a great organization that has strived to keep young people away from alcohol and drugs for over 20 years. They help families in crisis deal with both physical and substance abuse."

Together with the firm, the Ansell family has helped raise money for many different charities, including 180: Turning Lives Around (a Middletown-based organization that aids victims of domestic violence) as well as the Visiting Nurse Association, the latter in which Ansell's wife, Mary, takes an active role. A few

months ago, the lawyer and his family were honored by the Jewish Family and Children's Services for their years of community dedication.

"I had the most incredible role models in my father, grandfather, and uncles," Ansell said. "Ever since I was little, they instilled in us how important it is to give back and do what you can to help the community where you live and work. So working with these groups is such a natural fit for everyone here at the firm."

In the future, Ansell hopes to con-

tinue to grow the firm and increase the partners' charitable endeavors.

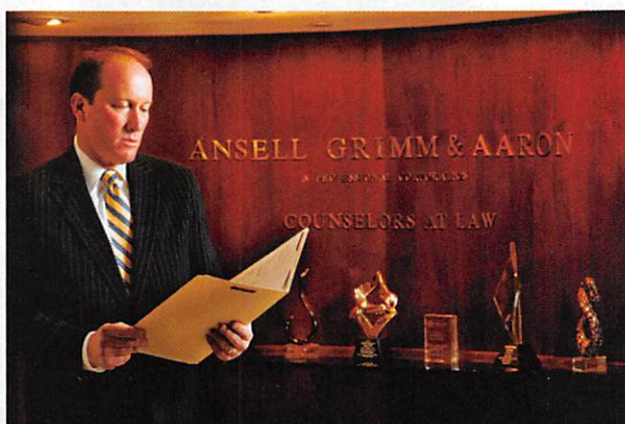
"We've grown in leaps and bounds over the past ten years, adding a number of young associates and even expanding to the New York office," Ansell said. "In the future, I only see the firm getting bigger and stronger for many years to come."

Not surprisingly given the family history, Ansell, who lives in Shrewsbury with his wife and three children, hopes to someday pass the torch to the next generation.





"I can remember being a kid, going into the office with my dad on Saturdays...helping him with the mail or drawing on a legal pad, and being completely inspired by what he did," Ansell concluded. "I don't know what the future holds for my children, but I'm hoping we can carry on the tradition of this firm to a fourth generation." •



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