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Goldberg, Segalla plants Chicago roots

Litigation defense office staffed by six lawyers who left Wiedner & McAuliffe

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Six lawyers have left a litigation defense firm to launch the local office of a burgeoning out-of-town firm.

Goldberg, Segalla, a firm started in Buffalo, N.Y., in 2001, opened a Chicago office last week. That firm now has 184 lawyers working in 12 U.S. offices and London.

The firm's Chicago office roster features David J. O'Connell, the administrative partner, along with partners James W. Ozog, James Michael Rozak, Brian J. Benoit and Ryan M. Frierott. Jennifer L. Rediehs also joined as an associate.

"This provided me with a significant opportunity to enhance myself personally and professionally with a great new team of lawyers and to help them expand their practice here into the Midwest," O'Connell said.

Those lawyers, led by O'Connell and Ozog, had worked at Wiedner & McAuliffe Ltd. for between two and 10 years. The team of six focuses on personal-injury, product-liability and professional-liability defense, business litigation and insurance coverage matters.

Both O'Connell and Ozog have known a handful of Goldberg, Segalla lawyers for many years. They referred business back and forth and sat next to one another defending separate clients in



David J. O'Connell

catastrophic personal-injury cases.

Ozog welcomes the chance to provide clients with more resources at a larger law firm.

"We have the capability of taking in whatever the firm does because ... we can get a professional from any office with the appropriate expertise to address any problem due to the firm's technology, the overall strength of the firm and the sharing and teamwork that the firm espouses," Ozog said.

The team of six lawyers formally told Wiedner & McAuliffe officials on Jan. 13 that they were leaving, said James W. Stevenson Jr., that firm's managing partner.

"We've maintained a professional relationship with them," he said. "They've now chosen a different path and we wish them the best."

Wiedner & McAuliffe, a litigation defense firm that focuses on workers' compensation and liability matters, now has 53 lawyers.

Ozog described Wiedner & McAuliffe as a great firm and



James W. Ozog

said the six lawyers enjoyed working there.

"The most difficult part of this move was leaving friends behind," he said.

Goldberg, Segalla opened the Chicago office because a few clients asked the firm to be their local lawyers, said Richard J. Cohen, the firm's New York-based managing partner. He declined to identify clients but said they include major insurance companies and 32 large companies.

The firm could also start the office here with lawyers that would be a good fit, Cohen said.

Both O'Connell and Ozog are exceptional litigators and individuals, Cohen said.

"We consider this an opportunity to continue to add to the talent base we've been bringing into the firm for the last 13 years," he said.

All of the Chicago group's main clients followed them to Goldberg, Segalla, O'Connell said. He declined to identify the number or names of clients.

Law firm management consultant Joel F. Henning said



Richard J. Cohen

Goldberg, Segalla is entering a highly competitive marketplace in personal-injury and product-liability defense.

"If, in fact, they are moving here because current clients urged them to do so, they have a good base to build on," Henning said. "If, however, they are mainly looking to obtain clients currently being defended in such cases by other Chicago firms, they will have a tough row to hoe."

The group of six lawyers who joined Goldberg, Segalla here at 311 S. Wacker Drive is the largest number the firm has brought in at one time.

That group represents the first of several waves of lawyer hirings at Goldberg, Segalla's Chicago office this year, Cohen said.

The local office is expected to grow rapidly, Cohen said, though he declined to provide the number of additional lawyers expected to be hired here.

"We want to be able to respond to the needs of our clients," he said. "That's what's fueled our growth."