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## Meet the New Associates

2010-11-11

This fall, WilmerHale welcomed 36 new associates to our US offices. Over the past few months, the firm has interviewed members of this dynamic class to learn about what drew them to the firm and about their interests outside the office.

In this fourth and final set of interviews, you'll meet associates from the Transactional and Litigation Departments whose interests range from architecture to swing dancing.



*(Adams and her husband swing dancing.)*

**Name:** Natalie Hirt Adams

**Office:** Washington DC

**Practice:** Litigation/Controversy

**School:** Duke University School of Law

**WH:** What is it about WilmerHale that made you want to practice here?

**Hirt Adams:** When I summered here, I worked on a fascinating pro bono case. The people on the case were extremely dedicated and great to work with. WilmerHale dedicated a lot of resources to something that was generating no revenue for the firm, but that was important (and, eventually, successful). I wanted to come here because WilmerHale has the resources to generate an excellent quality of work and is willing to channel some of those resources into meaningful causes.

**WH:** What are you most looking forward to as you begin your practice?

**Hirt Adams:** I'm looking forward to engaging in creative problem solving with really smart people.

**WH:** Describe your clerkship experience...

**Hirt Adams:** My first clerkship was with a federal district court. It was great because I got to experience the entire arc of a case, from complaint to judgment. While the experience was interesting factually, it was also helpful in teaching me the mechanics of trial-level litigation. My second clerkship with a federal appeals court allowed me to spend more time sounding the depth of the difficult legal issues contained in a case. Both clerkships taught me a lot, and the experiences complemented each other well.

**WH:** Tell us a fun fact about yourself...

**Hirt Adams:** I met my husband swing dancing. We're both swing dancers and went to the same dances twice a week. When I first saw him, I thought he was so much cooler than I was and there was no way he would ever talk to me. He didn't, for the first year. Then one day he did, and we were married less than a year later.



*(Ellis and his wife, Sarah, who recently celebrated the birth of their first child.)*

**Name:** Kevin Ellis

**Office:** Boston

**Practice:** Corporate

**School:** University of Virginia School of Law

**WH:** What is it about WilmerHale that made you want to practice here?

**Ellis:** As a law student, firms look very, very similar. WilmerHale stood out to me because it is genuinely interested in its people. During the interview process, the firm asked questions about my family and was very accommodating, and even in the tumultuous market during my third year of law school, the firm always made sure I was informed and involved in the decisions being made. It's that kind of attention, even in a firm of more than 1,000 attorneys, that sets WilmerHale far apart from its peers.

**WH:** What are you most looking forward to as you begin your practice?

**Ellis:** I'm genuinely looking forward to reconnecting with the people I met as a summer associate and working with them as peers. The assignments as a summer associate introduced me to the breadth of the available work, but now I'll be more involved and more able to take ownership.

**WH:** What did you do during your deferral period?

**Ellis:** During my deferral year, I chose to work at a small firm in Charlottesville, Virginia, where I attended law school. The firm specializes in a host of areas in which I won't practice here at WilmerHale, but it gave me the opportunity to experience law at a much more local and personal level, and showed me how firms of various sizes operate. People often wonder what other markets and types of firms are like, and I had the chance to experience that firsthand, which will give me great perspective on my work here and help me think about the legal world in a more global way.

**WH:** Tell us a fun fact about yourself...

**Ellis:** My wife, Sarah, and I just had our first child about eight weeks before I started work here, so I feel relatively prepared for anything that comes my way!



*(Gaponenko in the Galapagos Islands with a giant turtle.)*

**Name:** Tetyana Gaponenko

**Office:** New York

**Practice:** Litigation/Controversy

**School:** University of California, Berkeley School of Law

**WH:** What is it about WilmerHale that made you want to practice here?

**Gaponenko:** Mentoring relationships have always been very important to me. After my summer at the firm, I felt I could learn a lot from the people I worked with here, and that they would be willing to take the time to help me grow in my career.

**WH:** What are you most looking forward to as you begin your practice?

**Gaponenko:** I'm looking forward to improving my legal research and writing skills. Additionally, I'm very interested in trying different assignments within the Litigation/Controversy Department to see what projects I find most interesting.

**WH:** What did you do prior to starting at WilmerHale?

**Gaponenko:** I graduated from law school this year, so I took a little time off after studying for the bar. I am originally from Ukraine, so I had the opportunity to go home and visit my family. Prior to heading to New York to join the firm, I took a trip to Turkey. The country is very beautiful and my trip was very relaxing.

**WH:** Tell us a fun fact about yourself...

**Gaponenko:** While in college, I studied abroad in Ecuador, and spent some time at a biodiversity station in the Amazon and in the Galapagos Islands. Giant turtles left an unforgettable impression on me.