

## COMMUNITY

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# Divorce lawyer balances law firm, toddler

## PAOLA STANGE

**AGE** • 30, partner in the Stange Law Firm

**FAMILY** • Married to Kirk Stange, her partner in the law firm. One son, Benjamin, 10 months. They live in Brentwood. Paola was born in Guatemala City and raised in Atlanta where her father, Dr. Ricardo Arzu, did his medical school residency, then opened a practice. Her mother, Maria Arzu, is a teacher. One sister, Syra, 26. Paola's great-uncle, Alvaro Arzu, formerly was the president of Guatemala and is now the mayor of Guatemala City.



**When and why did you move to St. Louis?** • In 2007, because I married someone from here.

**How did you meet Kirk?** • I worked in the law offices of Cordell & Cordell in Atlanta and Kirk worked in the firm's offices here. We met at a retreat for the firm's attorneys in Quebec City. The retreat was for lawyers to bond, and Kirk and I bonded quite well.

**Where is Kirk from locally?** • He is from Eureka and graduated from Eureka High School in 1992.

**What aspects of the firm do you handle, and what does Kirk do?** • I handle most of the business end of the law firm, and Kirk does the court work. My first job after college — when I realized I was too talkative to spend my life in a research lab — was as a receptionist at a law firm. I wanted to see what I thought of being a lawyer, and I wound up taking care of a lot of the business end of the firm. I always liked math and science, and the business side lets me use some of my math skills.

**What were you planning to be when you earned a biology degree?** • I thought I was going to be a geneticist.

**Do you enjoy divorce work, which I understand can be emotionally draining?** • I like the process of helping people pull it all back together. We often see people at their worst — I've heard it called "divorce crazy" — and I think the mental health field should have a special category for that. But I really enjoy helping people move on from this time of their lives.

**Are you able to get away from the emotional side of it all?** • I know I can't let it get to me. I try to be practical and to help people think rationally. It's not always easy, but I enjoy it.

**What do you do that sets your firm apart from other domestic litigation firms?** • We answer our phones and our phone calls. Honestly, a lot of firms and a lot of lawyers don't call their clients back often until the client's crisis has passed. We promise that if you call us before 5 p.m., a real lawyer will call you back. We also give out our real cell phone numbers and we take our own calls. Kirk and I think it's very important for clients to be able to reach us.

**How many lawyers are in your firm?** • We now have four — two associates and Kirk and I as partners. We also just opened a St. Charles office.

**Life must be hectic with a baby and a law practice.** • It is, but Kirk and I are on the same page on the important stuff and it's working out well.

**Do you have time to do anything for fun?** • We actually just got a boat from my dad. It's a little runabout that my sister and I grew up with. We're hoping to get it in the water this summer and have some fun with that. We also like to travel and went to Guatemala this year. I spent all my summers there growing up, and I hope we can travel there a lot because much of my family is there.

**Do you speak Spanish?** • Yes. It was my first language.

**What is the last, best book you read?** • "The Go-Giver," by Bob Burg.

**What do you drive?** • Last month, I traded in my 2001 Jetta and got a 2002 Ford Explorer so we could get Benjamin's car seat in it. It's tannish? Gray-ish? A grayish-tan?

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