

## HOT-BUTTON ISSUES

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## BUCKLE UP — IT'S TIME FOR A ROAD TRIP!

## Ashley's Epic Journey From Houston to Chicago to Bring Her Sister Home

Hey readers, it's Ashley here! I'm stepping in for Russell this month to fill you in on the biggest adventure of my summer. This July, my husband and I took an epic four-day road trip to Chicago and back with one goal: To bring my sister, Cristina, home to Houston for good.

My sister and I have always been close, but since we lost our father suddenly last August, we're now pretty much the only family we have left. We grew up in South Florida and were practically joined at the hip the whole time. I'm three years older, and it seemed like Cristina always followed in my footsteps back then, first working with me at retail jobs in high school and then at my law firm job in college. It was great to spend so much time together and be able to look out for each other.

Funny enough, we both ended up going into law, too. While I worked my way through law school she became a paralegal (you can read more about that on Pg. 2). Eventually, though, we went our separate ways geographically. Cristina moved to Chicago with her husband and daughter and I ended up here in Houston.

Even though we lived hours apart, Cristina and I stayed best friends. We really wanted to work together again someday, and I had this dream that eventually she'd move down to Houston and get a job with me here at The Button Law Firm. She's the most hardworking person I know and stops at nothing to master whatever project she's working on, so I knew she would be a perfect fit for our team. Plus, she has really bad asthma, so I figured the warm air in Houston would be a lot better for her than freezing, windy Chicago. For years we agreed that we missed each other and wanted to be in each other's lives more, but the timing was never right for a move. Then, after our dad passed, Cristina decided it was time for us to live in the same city again.

The coronavirus pandemic threw a wrench in our plans to move her down this summer. But there aren't really any boundaries to what we'll do for each other, so my husband and I decided we'd



drive our truck and trailer from Houston to Chicago to pick her and her family up so that they wouldn't have to fly. It was truly an epic undertaking. We did the 16-hour drive in two legs, staying overnight in Arkansas the first day, then waking up early and driving into Chicago on day two. We got there at 3 p.m. and spent the rest of the day loading the trailer. She lived in a fourth-floor apartment in a complex with no elevator, so it was 11 p.m. by the time we finished packing! After that, we zombie-walked to bed, only to get up the next morning at the crack of dawn to shove the last few things in the trailer, clean the apartment, and hit the road again. Cristina, her husband, their 5-year-old daughter, and their Beagle (Copper), piled into our truck and set off for Houston.

Then, an hour and a half into the road trip, disaster struck. My adorable niece, who had been sleeping soundly until that point, woke up and — no joke — promptly threw up all over me. It was disgusting! I was sitting there in shock and my husband was trying to pull the truck over so that we could clean it up, when I looked

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# HOT HOUSEPLANT TIPS FROM A PARALEGAL

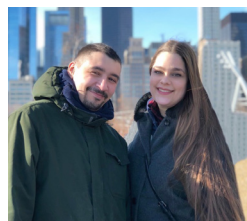
## MEET CRISTINA, OUR GREEN-THUMBED NEW HIRE

For the last year and a half, Russell has wanted to add another paralegal to our team. Rosie is our anchor in that department, but even though she's like Superwoman, she only has two hands! We needed someone solid, reliable, and hardworking to help her out. Luckily, as you read on Page 1, Ashley knew just the person for the job: her sister, Cristina Yanez. On July 15, we officially brought her on board.

Not only did Cristina survive the epic road trip from Chicago to Houston, but she's also been thriving here ever since. She keeps busy writing demands to insurance companies, combing through medical timelines and records, and doing whatever it takes to keep our pre-litigation cases on track. Before joining our team, Cristina worked at law firms in Chicago and Florida, starting part-time in college. Considering what an excellent paralegal Cristina is, we were surprised to learn law wasn't her first career path.

"I actually went to college for horticulture science because I wanted to be a florist and own my own greenhouse or nursery someday," she says. "But I ended up just sticking with legal work while I was going to school, and it snowballed from there."

Law is her passion now, but Cristina still has a soft spot for plants. She created a little jungle in her apartment and has already taken Ashley houseplant shopping! When we asked, she agreed to share a few of her top houseplant tips with you.



"My favorite plant that I'd recommend for beginners to grow would be a pothos because there are so many varieties, they're easy to take care of, they're hard to kill, and they're super rewarding because you don't feel like you're hurting anything — you're just helping it grow," she says. "My No. 1 tip for plant shopping would be to do your research before you just go to a nursery or Home Depot and grab a plant off the shelf, especially a super expensive plant. Some of them are so finicky and hard to take care of, and you end up throwing money away when they die in a week because they don't have the right atmosphere for them."

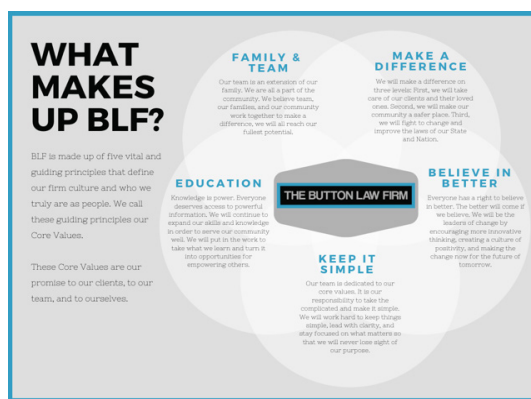
In addition to being a fount of plant facts, Cristina is the perfect fit for our firm. She hit the ground running, had plenty of experience, and hardly needed any training. Her mentality and attitude are perfect for the job, too — we can't wait to see what our team can do with her help!

## GOODBYE WORDS, HELLO GRAPHICS! WHY BLF IS DOUBLING DOWN ON VISUALS THIS FALL

Late last year, Ashley and Russell made a pact: They would both read the famous book "Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business" by Gino Wickman over the holidays. "Traction" is full of strategies for leadership improvement and business growth, and it inspired Russell and Ashley to take BLF to the next level. Right away, they started implementing the Traction Model outlined in the book.

The first step was getting organized, rounding out our firm's core values, and getting the right people in the right seats. Hiring Cristina was the last piece of that puzzle (you can read more about her journey to the firm on Pg. 1), so this fall, we're moving on to step two: turning the firm's written processes, work flows, and core values into eye-catching visuals.

Going from words to graphics has a few benefits. First and foremost, it makes it easier for our team to understand things at a glance, including their roles and how they can work together to perform even better going forward. The lightbulb moment really went off for us during a company Zoom meeting this summer, when Russell and Ashley unveiled what we call our "Team



Ownership Chart." The chart showed where every person in the firm fit into the bigger system, and as soon as that eureka moment hit, we started operating more quickly and with more confidence than before. It's been revolutionary and even made hiring easier!

Going visual also simplifies our processes from an outside perspective, making it easier for us to walk clients through their cases and referral partners through our collaborations. Now, on Zoom calls with our clients, we can just screenshare the charts, graphs, and other images we've

created. This is a lot better for everyone than a wall of text, especially because we're including print copies in our client handbooks.

Russell, Ashley, and the rest of us here at BLM are incredibly excited about this new direction. We've already gotten great results internally with this system, which just goes to show that a small change can have a big impact. Going forward, we're going to continue implementing Wickman's ideas to grow the company and make our client and partner experiences even better. We can't wait to see where this journey takes us, and we're glad you're along for the ride!



## ... CONTINUED FROM COVER

down to see that the dog was throwing up too! The only thought going through my head at that point was, "Oh, my god, if this is how the next 16 hours of my life are going to be, I'm not sure if I'll make it back to Houston."

Thankfully, once we cleaned up and got back on the road, the rest of the trip was smooth sailing. My niece and Copper felt better, the weather was nice, and the roads were good from Illinois to Arkansas — and the next day, things were great from Arkansas to Texas as well. When we got back to the city, we went straight to Cristina's new apartment and helped unpack everything we'd just packed up two days before. As you can imagine, by the end of all that, we were exhausted! Still, it was completely worth it to have my little sister back.

I feel so lucky to have Cristina here in Houston and even luckier that the second part of my dream came true. On July 15, Cristina officially joined The Button Law Firm as a paralegal! We don't work together directly, but we see each other all the time, and it's great knowing that she has my back, just like in the old days. This month is my three-year anniversary with the firm, and it has never felt more like home!

Just as I'd hoped, Cristina is a perfect fit for our team. I think she's really found her place here. She cares so much about the people we help day to day, and her investment and compassion for our clients shows. In typical Cristina fashion, she got down to work on her very first day when Russell assigned her a book for



our firm-wide reading project. Even though there's no deadline and she had at least a month to read the book, when I picked her up for work the next morning, she told me, "Ashley, I read 50 pages last night!" By the end of the week, she'd worked her butt off to get through the whole book.

I'm so happy to be working with my sister again, and I'm proud that our family has found a home at The Button Law Firm. I've spent three great years here already, and pandemic or no pandemic, the future looks bright!

*-Ashley Washington*

## BUTTON LAW HIGHLIGHT REEL



Desi and Riley are having a boy



Russell's sister and her husband got a new house



Cristina's daughter with Buddy the BLF Dog

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## STRUGGLING WITH DEBT DURING THE PANDEMIC?

### Our Friend Megan Daic Can Help



Every once in a while, you meet a rare person who makes you stand back and think, "Wow." That was Ashley's reaction when she met Megan Daic.

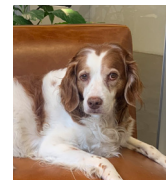
Megan is a Texas lawyer, law firm owner, and University of Houston adjunct professor. She's also an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) coach and the women's caucus chair of the Houston Trial Lawyers Association. Around those commitments, she volunteers at Kennedy Elementary School to make sure students have the technology they need for distance learning. Oh, and she's also a dog mom to two adorable pups: Bella and Scout!

"I have no idea how she has the time in her day to do all of the things she does,"

Ashley says of Megan. "I think she lives on a different clock. I have 24 hours in the day, sometimes less, and Megan has 48 at least!"

Megan and Ashley met through the Houston Trial Lawyers Association, and they both coached ADR last year, traveling with groups of law school students from the University of Houston to competitions across the country. This year's contests are all virtual, but Megan is still just as excited about coaching. She brings that same level of passion to every area of her life in law, and it's particularly clear when she talks about helping her clients.

"We mainly handle debt defense cases and represent consumers being sued by creditors. That includes people who are being sued by banks and those who default on their loans or car payments. We also handle Chapter 7 bankruptcy cases," she



explains. "My goal is to make the litigation process less scary for people. I always say, 'You don't have to worry about this because it's my job to take care of it for you.'"



Right now, Daic Law's services are more important than ever because of the coronavirus pandemic. Bankruptcies are on the rise for both businesses and individuals, and people who have lost their jobs are struggling to pay off debts. In both of those situations, Megan and her team can help. If you could use some assistance to get through this tough year, visit **DaicLaw.com** to learn more. Megan has been a great partner for us, and we highly recommend her.