

## RISING STAR LAWYERS

### Lisha Graham, White Arnold & Dowd PC

**Title:** Shareholder

**Practice area:** Civil and complex litigation, insurance defense, appellate advocacy, financial services litigation, products liability

**Years practicing:** 6

**Law school:** Cumberland School of Law

**Age:** 29

**Why did you decide to be a lawyer?** I decided to go to law school while attending medical school interviews. Aside from marrying my husband, it has been my best life decision.

**What's your favorite legal TV show or movie?** My Cousin Vinny



**What's the biggest misconception people have about lawyers from TV shows/movies?** TV

shows portray a lot of animosity amongst lawyers, giving lawyers the reputation of being "mean" or "conniving." In reality, there is still a great deal of camaraderie in the legal community, including

between opposing counsel.

**What has been your greatest accomplishment so far in your legal career?** I have found the passion for my

career at an early age. Better yet, I have found a firm in which to cultivate that passion, and which in turn, has chosen to equally invest in me. I consider that as my biggest professional accomplishment.

### Jonathan Hooks, Christian & Small LLP

**Title:** Associate

**Age:** 37

**Areas of practice:** Products liability, medical malpractice, government relations, appellate

**Years practicing:** 9

**Law school:** Cumberland School of Law

**Why did you decide to be a lawyer?** I believed I could persuasively argue in a way that was sensible and interesting.

**Did you have a fictional attorney who has been your inspiration?** Credit to Ben Matlock. He was the first TV lawyer I watched with regularity, and Matlock showed me early on that being a lawyer is not all



research and trials, but includes a lot of time getting one's nails dirty investigating every angle of a case.

**What has been your greatest accomplishment so far in your legal career?** The Alabama House of Representatives hired me to serve as legal counsel to various committees and to advise the

speaker's office on pending legislation. As a political junkie, it was an honor and a pleasure to serve.

**What's your philosophy on serving clients?** Clients are relatively easy to please. Perform expected and assigned tasks, don't waste their money, and be nice, and you will keep almost every client completely satisfied.

### Ryan Lutz, Cory Watson Attorneys

**Title:** Principal

**Age:** 35

**Areas of practice:** Class action, product and personal injury litigation for plaintiffs.

**Years practicing:** 9

**Law school:** Cumberland School of Law

**Why did you decide to be a lawyer?** It is a noble profession where I can make a difference.

**Did you have a fictional attorney who has been your inspiration?** Atticus Finch

**What's your favorite legal TV show or movie?** To Kill a Mockingbird

**What's the biggest misconception people**



**have about lawyers from TV shows/movies?** Lawyers do not spend most of their time in a courtroom.

**What has been your greatest accomplishment so far in your legal career?** Through litigation and class certification, my team changed an industry standard that now requires manufacturers to equip glass-front

gas fireplaces with a guard to protect children from suffering severe burns by accidental contact with the hot glass.

**What's your philosophy on serving clients?** Open and honest communication and aggressive representation.

**What's on top of your career bucket list?** Argue a case at the U.S. Supreme Court.

### Aaron G. McLeod, Adams and Reese LLP

**Title:** Associate

**Age:** 33

**Areas of practice:** Appellate litigation, civil litigation.

**Years practicing:** 7

**Law school:** University of Alabama

**Why did you decide to be a lawyer?** The practice of law seemed to fit my skill set and interests well, and offered the prospect of a good living.

**What's the biggest misconception people have about lawyers from TV shows/movies?** That they go to court all the time.

**What has been your greatest**



**accomplishment so far in your legal career?** Winning a case I argued before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals.


**If you could change one part of the legal process, what would it be and why?** The billable hour as a measure of my value and productivity.

**What is a book that has influenced your career?** "The Winning Brief" by Bryan Garner.

**If you could make any change to improve metro Birmingham, what would it be?** Repave and widen Interstate 65 from I-20/59 to I-459.

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**Benjamin S. Goldman with Hand Arendall**

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**What's been the secret to success in your career so far?** The secret to my success has been relationships - building, maintaining and growing relationships with clients and those in the community. Ultimately, it is not enough to simply work hard; we need to work together if we are going to accomplish anything that is meaningful in our work and service.

**How has your practice evolved into your current areas of focus?** In addition to my work representing local cities and towns, I have developed an expertise

in bankruptcy litigation and creditors' rights. The common thread that I find between these two practice areas is that I am helping my clients find lost things. For cities, this often means rebuilding and strengthening communities through innovative representation to help revitalize areas that have fallen into disrepair for any number of reasons. Returning the lost charm of these areas can be a key to strengthening neighborhoods and communities. For creditors, it means leaving no stone unturned to return the fullest recovery possible.

2001 Park Place North, Suite 1200, Birmingham, AL 35203  
205-502-0142 | [bgoldman@handarendall.com](mailto:bgoldman@handarendall.com) | [www.handarendall.com](http://www.handarendall.com)

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