

MVP: Willkie Farr's Allison Tam

By Daphne Zhang

Law360 (October 9, 2020, 3:16 PM EDT) -- Allison Tam of Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP led her firm in advising KKR & Co. on its \$4.4 billion acquisition of Global Atlantic Financial Group, one of the largest life insurance M&A deals in 2020, landing her on the list of Law360's 2020 Insurance MVPs.

HER BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT THIS YEAR:

Tam leads a team of Willkie attorneys in advising KKR, a global investment firm, on its \$4.4 billion acquisition of Bermuda-based privately owned insurer Global Atlantic Financial Group. It was the largest announced life insurance-sector acquisition of the year as of September.

"This was their first foray into acquiring an insurance company," Tam said about KKR. "They signed up that transaction in early July. We now are seeking regulatory approval."

Tam said the deal is expected to close in early 2021, and she believed that it was a "tremendous accomplishment" for the team to help their client achieve the deal while they're not in the office and working from separate locations. She said she has been striving to make sure "that everyone is emotionally doing okay" on her team since it can be stressful working during the pandemic.

"As a legal service provider, I think we've been able to keep to the same level of service. And in some ways we're even more available, because we're not going to get anywhere as well," she said.

WHAT SHE IS PROUD OF:

Tam said her other, "equally as important biggest achievement" was providing legal service while trying to be the best parent she could be to her two teenage boys as she worked from home.

"In some ways, the pandemic was actually a blessing for me because I have spent more time with my children than I had ever done in my last 23 years," she said. "What's been nice is when I take a coffee



break, I can take it with my kids who are down the hall, which I wasn't able to do when I was in the office."

Tam said her "secret weapon" to balancing her career and her life as a mother is that her husband, whom she met in law school, is a stay-at-home dad.

"He left the legal career early on and stayed at home with our children," she said. "That has been a tremendous asset to my career, to my children, and has been a wonderful thing,"

ANOTHER NOTABLE CASE THIS YEAR:

Tam was the lead counsel representing Fidelity National Financial in its \$2.7 billion acquisition of FGL Holdings, a provider of annuity and life insurance products. When the deal closed on June 1, it was the largest life insurance-sector acquisition of the year.

"We were finishing the regulatory approval process right in the middle of lockdown," she said. "My proudest moment was just being able to navigate all of this in the middle of a pandemic and make sure my team was okay, and that we were providing the level of service that we needed to provide."

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Tam said the biggest motivator for her is to get good results for her clients.

"They've come to me and trusted me with their largest matters," she said. "And being able to see it through and make sure it's done in the way that they want and getting the best ... for the clients really motivates me."

Tam said she is also driven to help junior associates grow by giving them opportunities.

ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

After practicing law for 23 years, Tam thinks it's important for younger attorneys to recognize that the practice of law is a skill learned after years of doing it. She said junior lawyers should also surround themselves with people who will invest in their careers and help them learn and grow as lawyers.

"One of my female mentors early on at my first firm just always said to me, 'Allison, it's a marathon, not a sprint,'" Tam said. "You really can't get down on yourself if you don't feel like you know all the answers right away."

"It's a collaborative practice. It's a process of learning," she added.

— *As told to Daphne Zhang.*

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2020 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.