

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Curfman an avid skateboarder

BY DANIELLE LEDBETTER

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Chris Curfman is not your average lawyer. Instead of walking a posh golf course, he zigzags through the ramps at **Swift Cantrell Skate Park in Kennesaw**. He is an avid skateboarder and an intellectual property attorney. It may be an unlikely combination, but not for Curfman.

He is a founding principal and partner at **Meunier Carlin & Curfman LLC**. According to Curfman, there are several similarities between his profession and his hobby. As an intellectual property lawyer he has to be creative to construct new patent applications. Similarly, he said skateboarding allows him to take risks by practicing a new trick.

Curfman grew up in Virginia Beach, Va. He said he tried all the usual sports; basketball, football and baseball. But it was skateboarding that piqued his interest most.

"I started to skate when I was 12 and fell in love with it," Curfman said. He got a few sponsors from local surf shops and competed in about 20 amateur competitions.

Competing became difficult when Curfman started college at **Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**. He received his bachelor's of science degree with a double major in biology and chemistry and later a master's degree in chemistry from **Virginia Tech**. However, he still continued to skateboard.

After obtaining his master's degree, he went to **Emory University** to obtain his doctorate in organic chemistry. He said he wanted to become a chemistry professor, but it was at Emory that he was introduced to the world of patents.

"My adviser at Emory, Dr. Dennis Liotta (of the AIDS drug AZT fame), was very savvy in regards to patents," Curfman said. "He [Liotta] saw that, perhaps my research, speaking, and writing skills were better than my lab bench skills and he made some introductions in the legal field. My research, speaking and writing skills (what I thought would make me a good chemistry professor) also translated to patent law very well. The rest, they say, is history," Curfman said.

Following graduation from Emory, he received his juris doctorate degree from **Georgia State University** in 2004. After obtaining his law degree he became an attorney and the head of pharmaceutical patent practice group with Needle & Rosenberg. He was then an associate with **Ballard Spahr LLP** until the inception of Meunier, Carlin, & Curfman.

"He is not one who brags and he doesn't talk for the sake of talking," said **Steve Schaetzel**, a law partner at Meunier Carlin & Curfman. As Schaetzel learned more about Curfman, he realized there were more facets to his personality.

"For example, he is an accomplished skateboarder and he rides motorcycles but he never goes around boasting about it," Schaetzel said.



Intellectual property attorney Chris Curfman is an avid skateboarder. He's been at his sport for more than 30 years.

He has been recognized as Georgia Super Lawyer Rising Star three years in a row beginning in 2012. Curfman has published research articles and has won awards for his research and teachings.

Just as Curfman is not your typical attorney, he said he wants his firm to stand out, too. Established in 2010, the firm focuses on service, but at reasonable prices.

The partners of Meunier Carlin & Curfman said they noticed a trend that traditional law firms spent money on lavish retreats and outings causing a high mark-up on their services.

"We essentially wanted to have a cut the fat approach," Curfman said.

Meunier Carlin & Curfman specializes in patent prosecution and litigation in chemical technology and biotechnology. The practice works with many pharmaceutical, organic chemistry, and material science technologies, as well. The firm now has more than 20 patent bar practitioners.

It's been 30 years since Curfman hopped on his first board. Having time to reflect, he describes the skating culture as an encouraging environment. Participants often are not competing against each other, but against himself or herself creating a positive uplifting environment.

That's similar to how his peers describe him. **Moore Hallmark**, a good

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friend of Curfman's, describes him as an encouraging man with a willingness to help others with his knowledge and insight. "He [Curfman] is a real free spirit with a calm, cool and collected demeanor," he said. "When talking he never raises his voice."

Curfman has come full circle, fulfilling his dream of teaching. He is an adjunct intellectual law professor at Emory University. "I got to fulfill a dream. I try very hard to be a good teacher."

Curfman also tries to make the subject matter understandable and interesting by involving his favorite pastime. "I do try to mix skating into my law classes," He said. "All my exams (so far) have involved skateboarding."

CHRIS
CURFMAN**Born:** Virginia Beach, Va.**Lives in:** Kennesaw**Age:** 43**Current job:** Principal with Meunier Carlin & Curfman LLC**Previous job:** Associate with Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersol LLP**Education:** J.D., Georgia State University College of Law; doctorate in organic chemistry, Emory University; master's in chemistry and bachelor's in biology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**Family:** Wife, one son and twin daughters**Hobbies:** Skateboarding, spending time with his family