

POWERPLAYERS

JEFFERY LEVING

Q: What makes you matter in your industry?

A: In the area of divorce and child custody law, I was a pioneer in recognizing the value of fathers, and fighting for their right to be involved in the upbringing of their children, even if their relationship with the mother comes to an end. I co-authored the 1986 Illinois Joint Custody Act, which was the first law in Illinois to recognize fathers' claims for joint custody over the objection of the mother. Before that, in many situations in which fathers were divorced or never married, they could spend time with their kids only if the mother allowed it. Not only do we now have a joint custody law, but I and the lawyers and staff at my firm have worked for decades, imploring judges to apply the law fairly, and we have made a difference for thousands of dads and kids, making their lives more fulfilling.

Q: What is the greatest challenge facing your industry?

A: Even though joint custody has been the law for 33 years, we still have people - judges and parents - who assume that mothers are inherently better parents than fathers. Not true, children need their fathers. Father absence is the No. 1 predictor of crime in America; it's also a contributor to poor academic performance, poor physical health, and crime victimhood, including sexual assault. I have to spend a considerable amount of time, with clients, potential clients and at public speaking engagements, convincing divorcing or separating men that they belong in their children's lives and they should not give up hope.

Q: What do you do for fun?

A: I'm a painter, mostly acrylic-on-canvas, surrealist, abstract. My first exhibition was when I was a student at Southern Illinois University in the 1970s, and I have dozens of paintings that are in galleries, private collections and on my website LevingGallery.com.

19 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1500
jleving@levinglaw.com

