Joshua Cox, Attorney, Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Freeman & Sarver

Kelly Cox, School Social Worker, Carver Collegiate Academy

Josh and Kelly Cox met as teachers at a local charter school in New Orleans because they saw education as a way to make a difference. After teaching for a short period, both decided the classroom was not the best fit and went back to school. Josh went to the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and Kelly got a Master’s of Social Work at Bryn Mawr College.

The city’s unique combination of career opportunity and quality of life drew them back. “I wanted to pursue social work particularly to bring it back to New Orleans,” says Kelly, a native of Kentucky. “For Josh, it took two weeks out of the city to say ‘what did we do?’ He didn’t know I had a plan to come back to New Orleans all along. Here, we work hard. Achievement really motivates us and we want to be the best at what we do, but we want to enjoy our lives, the people we’re around, and our city’s traditions. In New Orleans, you don’t have to make a choice between these two important things. It’s a city that values work-life balance.”

Josh, a Gainesville, Fla. native whose career path also includes a year spent playing baseball professionally, along with time in New York and Washington, D.C., agrees wholeheartedly. “New York is full of people with excellent school credentials, who are extremely smart and hardworking. That intense competition means that folks distinguish themselves by working longer hours and sacrificing nights and weekends. However, quality of life matters to me, and it’s clear that quality of life matters to people in New Orleans as much as professional opportunity does. I’ve lived in several cities and I can see it in the way people approach their jobs and their lives. People here prioritize things that add meaning to life.”

The city’s vibrance, resilience, culture, opportunities and its people provide a base for a whole life and afford them the chance to enjoy themselves while building both professional and personal relationships.

“It comes down to value and values,” says Josh. “Many of my law school classmates value working for prestigious firms in big cities. I’ve chosen to chase happiness over prestige. Every dollar I earn is worth more to me not only because of our city’s manageable cost of living, but also because I’m just happier here.”

Kelly recalls time spent elsewhere as merely a hiatus. “I loved the city and wanted to be part of the community so badly that looking elsewhere was never part of the equation.”

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“New York is full of people with excellent school credentials, who are extremely smart and hardworking. That intense competition means that folks jockey for opportunities to advance by working longer hours and sacrificing nights and weekends. In New Orleans, there’s a lot more green space, literally and metaphorically. There’s much less standing between you and opportunity.”

-Joshua Cox, attorney, Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Law Firm

“Quality of life matters to me, and it’s clear that quality of life matters to people here as much as professional opportunity does. I’ve lived in several cities and I can see it in the way people approach their jobs and their lives in New Orleans. People here prioritize things that add meaning to life.”

-Joshua Cox, attorney, Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Law Firm

“I’d say my choice to live here boils down to what I value. Many of my law school classmates value working for prestigious firms in big cities and doing more prestigious, more complex work. However, in New Orleans, I’ve gotten the opportunity to develop my skills as a lawyer because my firm has given me a lot of responsibility early, which wouldn’t have happened at a big city firm. I’ve chosen to chase opportunity and happiness over prestige.”

-Joshua Cox, attorney, Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Law Firm

“The spending power of every dollar I earn in New Orleans is worth more. I did the math – it’s about double what the same dollar would get me in New York.”

-Joshua Cox, attorney, Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Law Firm

“Every day I go to work and I’m absolutely blown away. The strength and resilience of the kids in my school is unmatched anywhere else I’ve been. I consider it an extreme privilege to work with my kids. The vibrance, the resilience of the people, the culture – this city completely blew me out of the water.”

-Kelly Cox, school social worker, Carver Collegiate Academy

“It comes down to value and values. I did the math – the spending power of every dollar I earn in New Orleans is about double what the same dollar would get me in New York. Plus, I’m just happier here.”

-Joshua Cox, attorney, Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Law Firm

“Here, we work hard. Achievement really motivates us and we want to be the best at what we do. But we want to enjoy our lives, the people we’re around, and the city’s traditions. In New Orleans, you don’t have to make a choice between these two important things. It’s a city that values work-life balance.”

-Kelly Cox, school social worker, Carver Collegiate Academy

“Being so close to people and having a chance to spend time with them are things I wouldn’t trade for anything, and we couldn’t get that in a lot of other places. We want to feel part of building something and feel we’re excelling at what we do. That’s really possible here.”

-Kelly Cox, school social worker, Carver Collegiate Academy