For the last 14 years, the 40 Under Forty Committee at Law Bulletin Publishing Company sifts through over hundreds of nomination forms to select 40 of the most talented young attorneys working in Illinois.

What does it take to earn recognition as one of the best young lawyers in Illinois? Intelligence, passion, success in the office, a desire to help the community, and, most importantly, a willingness to work hard at one of the Country’s most important professions.

Many of the names listed on the past honoree pages are now on their firm’s management committee, are local and federal judges and most have assumed leadership roles in their practice area.

Putting together this issue is no easy task. We solicited nominations from across the state. This year, it seemed the competition was more intense than ever. We received more than 1,350 nominations for attorneys from Chicago down to Edwardsville and back up to Rockford. The nominations for these attorneys came from around the globe.

We then worked with our nominated attorneys in fine tuning their profiles.

The results, we hope, offer both an entertaining and educational read.

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RICK MURPHY is a personal injury attorney who routinely obtains high six or seven figure results for his clients. He’s the product of a blue collar union family and graduate of Brother Rice High School.

Murphy, 38, is a named partner at Costello, McMahon, Burke & Murphy. He graduated from the IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law. In 2000, Murphy was hired by the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office and worked in the felony trial division prosecuting violent crimes. He left the State’s Attorney’s office in 2005 to work on behalf of plaintiffs in personal injury cases. He has gone to verdict in over 30 jury trials and has tried hundreds of bench trials.

Alzetta L. Bozeman, of the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, was struck by Murphy’s zeal and ambition when he worked in the office.

When a partner was needed to assist on a serial rapist case, Bozeman said Murphy was her first choice. “His closing argument was both powerful and persuasive,” Bozeman said. “The jury returned a guilty verdict within 11 minutes.”

Attorney Kevin J. Golden, now of Dudley & Lake, worked with Murphy at the State’s Attorney’s Office, and was impressed with how quickly he moved up the ranks. “Rick was promoted to the felony trial division after only 2 1/2 years at the State’s Attorney’s Office,” Golden said.

Murphy’s successes to date are many.

In 2008, he tried an automobile accident case where a client required two back surgeries and was awarded $1.8 million. That year, he also tried a case where a client was injured when he came into contact with a high voltage line. The jury awarded the plaintiff $4.74 million. The now retired Hon. Henry R. Simmons, presided over the case had this to say about Murphy. “His closing argument was thorough, persuasive and ultimately successful. His demeanor and style was equal to seasoned veteran litigators.”

William G. Warshaw, of Bruce Farrel Dorn & Associates, said Murphy’s settlements and verdicts speak for themselves. “What strikes me most about Rick is his willingness to adapt,” Warshaw said. “That Rick manages to convince his clients to adapt is a testament to their trust in him, especially when so many litigants have a ‘Hail Mary’ approach to litigation.”

Warshaw a former trial opponent of Murphy, said when Rick takes a case to trial, you can be sure it will be tight with few possibilities to puncture the plaintiff’s credibility. “The way to make a defense attorney’s job easy is overreaching; Rick does not overreach,” Warshaw said.

Sean P. MacCarthy, of Chittenden, Murday & Novotny LLC, has also been impressed with Murphy as opposing counsel.

MacCarthy first met Murphy after Murphy filed a medical malpractice lawsuit against one of MacCarthy’s hospital clients. “This particular medical malpractice lawsuit was a claim involving a catastrophic injury which resulted when a 45-year-old went in to the hospital for out-patient knee surgery, and, allegedly as a result of negligent care on behalf of an anesthesiologist, she suffered from brain damage requiring 24 hr care,” MacCarthy said, adding from the start Murphy made it clear he was going to do everything in his power to obtain a just and fair result for his client.

MacCarthy said Murphy was exceptionally seasoned, knew about medical issues, the Rules of Evidence, and used a practical, common sense approach. “As a result of Rick’s efforts, the case ultimately settled for $6.75 million,” MacCarthy said, adding that during the four years of litigation, he noticed that Murphy went above and beyond for his client. Also, the client had a young daughter, and Murphy took a personal stake in the client’s daughter’s well-being by monitoring her school work and report cards, MacCarthy said.

This was not the only example of Murphy going above and beyond to help someone.

Attorney Steven M. Mahoney said one of Murphy’s favorite cases was one handled pro bono by his office. In that case, Murphy and Jim Costello sued an insurance company for denying the son of a local fireman a desperately needed medical procedure. After a hard fought battle, Mahoney said, the insurance company agreed to pay for the medical procedure, decided to change their medical policy regarding the procedure and agreed to compensate the client for prolonging the surgery.