

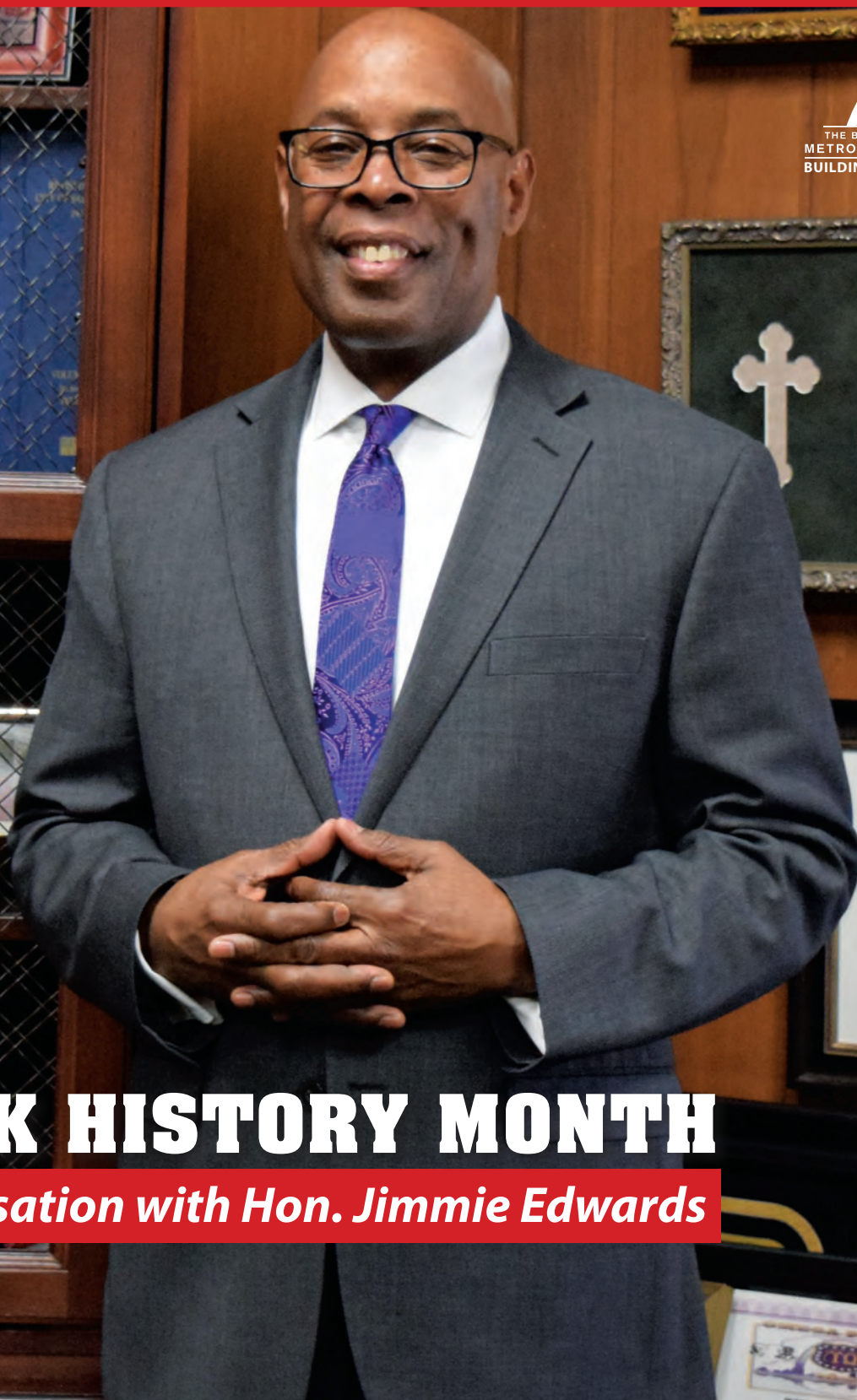
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BUILDING BETTER LAWYERS



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

A Conversation with Hon. Jimmie Edwards

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Volunteer of the Month



BRANDAN MUELLER
Partner
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BRANDON BLACK
Associate
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Lawyers feel a sense of satisfaction when they win on a complex case. But a team of Husch Blackwell attorneys found out just how nimble they would need to be due to the series of twists and turns that not only wove through one particular pro bono case but also around the legal team that built it—and won at trial.

The case stemmed from a December 2014 apartment fire in St. Louis County. The residents had renter’s insurance and submitted a claim to the insurance company. In January of 2016, the insurance company filed a declaratory judgement in federal court against the residents asserting the insurance company did not have an obligation to pay the claim. The insurance company alleged the insureds intentionally set the fire and misrepresented information to the insurance company.

The insureds requested pro bono counsel and Judge Catherine Perry contacted Husch Blackwell’s JoAnn Sandifer, who recommended Ken Heineman for the court appointment. Heineman worked on the case with Jonathan Waldron, who later moved to Lathrop Gage and continued to work on the case with Heineman after the move.

In 2018, Heineman became ill. Husch Blackwell partner Brandon Mueller was asked to join Waldron to take the case to trial less than two months before it was set to begin. Heineman and paralegal Shelah Feldman helped Mueller get up to speed while Mueller approached associate Brandon Black, to assist. Black, a 2018

graduate of the Washington University School of Law, was sworn into the Missouri Bar and the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri in October, just two weeks before the trial began.

“Brandon was critical to the representation of our clients and got invaluable experience just after being sworn in,” Mueller said. “He was in court every day as a key part of the trial team. He was at our office late into the night prepping for the next day. We stayed till 2 or 3 a.m. one night coming up with our closing. He prepped witnesses, drafted motions, attended hearings and interacted with our clients and co-counsel. As a brand new, freshly sworn-in associate, he got trial experience litigators fight tooth-and-nail to get.”

Black is grateful for the experience.

“New associates at most large law firms do not have the opportunity to develop and implement trial strategy on day one, and I am very grateful that I had this unique opportunity to gain trial experience and also achieve a great outcome for our clients,” Black said. “Before starting at Husch Blackwell, I knew that the firm had a great culture and that HB attorneys were willing to go out of their way to help new associates, but I was pleasantly surprised at the degree of genuine collaboration. Not only was I able to learn a lot from the partners on the case, but they also welcomed my input and treated me as a peer. Having your voice truly heard as a new attorney is very rewarding.”

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