



# Oakland County Legal News

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## Law firm's group helps build franchise



The Franchise Group includes (left to right) Rebecca Turner, Stuart Bordman, Gary Remer, and Brandon Buck.  
Photo by Robert Chase

**By Sheila Pursglove  
Legal News**

The Franchise Group at Maddin Hauser in Southfield launched last November. And what a year it's been for attorneys Stuart Bordman, Gary Remer, Rebecca Turner, and Brandon Buck.

The group is spearheaded by Bordman, a Detroit native who is not only an attorney—with a law degree from Northwestern University and bachelor's degree from Michigan State University—but also a CPA and former chairman of the Oakland County Bar Association Tax Committee.

"I knew an accounting background would assist me in the practice of law," he says. "After graduating from law school and becoming an attorney, I worked for two years in the tax department of an international accounting firm in its Detroit office."

Franchising can be an excellent way for entrepreneurs to enter business, he says.

"An entrepreneur who becomes a franchisee and buys into the franchise concept

will avoid a lot of the mistakes made by entrepreneurs who enter into business on their own,” Bordman says.

But trying to expand isn't always a good idea. Franchisees face a lot of challenges when trying to grow from a single to a multi-unit operation, according to Bordman.

“There's a big difference between being personally involved in the business operations of one franchised unit, where the franchisee is present each day, to monitoring the operations of several franchised units.”

And in today's economy, franchisors often face challenges in finding adequately financed, capable individuals for their franchise systems, Bordman says.

Bordman, a member of the International Franchise Association, began doing franchise work before Michigan adopted its Franchise Investment Law in 1974. Since the early 1980s he has represented franchisor Hungry Howie's Pizza & Subs, Inc., which started with a handful of units and now has more than 550 units and an affiliated distribution company.

This year the Franchise Group began representing three start-up franchisors including LLLite Center for Hair Advancement, LLC; Just Baked; and a retailer who will begin to franchise as soon as it completes a name change. The Franchise Group also represents a company that operates several hotels as the franchisee of a number of international hotel systems.

Franchising is familiar turf to Turner. A Woodhaven native who now calls Rochester home, she has seen both sides of the coin. Her husband Jason and his family own and operate multiple Jimmy John's Gourmet Sandwiches restaurants and one Biggby Coffee.

“Jason has owned and operated his first Jimmy John's since 2003,” Turner says. “I have a deep understanding of the business of franchising as well as the legal side, which lets me be a stronger advocate, providing not only legal advice, but operational advice and strategic planning, for my clients.”

The franchise industry as a whole is a vital sector in the U.S. economy, says Turner, whose qualifications include membership in the International Franchising Association (Certified Franchise Executive Candidate), Women's Franchise Network of Southeast Michigan, and American Bar Association (Forum on Franchising).

“Franchising gives entrepreneurial minded individuals an opportunity to own their own business while following a proven business model,” she says. “Many franchisees are of a similar mindset as the founder or executive staff of their franchisor, and they all share a common passion for their franchise brand.”

Turner, who was named a Michigan Rising Star in 2008, 2009 and 2010, became a shareholder at Maddin Hauser in January. She holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Western Michigan University Haworth College of Business, and her law degree, cum laude, from Syracuse University College of Law.

Like Bordman, Remer is a CPA, with a bachelor's degree in accounting from MSU and law degree, summa cum laude, from the Detroit College of Law at MSU.

“When I started college I never considered going into accounting,” Remer says. “My view started to change once I took my first accounting class. Then after I took my first tax class I was truly hooked. It's provided a great background for business.”

The West Bloomfield resident spent four years as a revenue agent with the Internal Revenue Service, where he first thought about going into law.

“I interacted with many different attorneys and was impressed with their ability to maneuver through and use the law to the advantage of their clients,” he says.

The four Franchise Group attorneys—who draft franchise agreements, prepare Federal Trade Commission mandated Franchise Disclosure Documents, register franchisors to offer franchises, litigate and arbitrate franchise disputes and negotiate supply agreements—each brings a level of sophistication to very specialized areas of the law, Remer says.

“The composition allows us to address the needs of our franchise clients, and that's a great feeling,” Remer says. “The other aspect I personally like, that makes my job great, is getting to know my clients and understand their goals. This goes beyond having the opportunity to work with them on tax and business matters. It's building trust so the relationship goes from attorney to trusted advisor. That desire runs through our team.”

Buck, who received his bachelor's degree with honors from Wayne State University and his law degree with honors from Wayne State University Law School in 2001, handles franchise litigation when the need arises.

In order to litigate franchise disputes one must possess particular knowledge, training and experience because there are many unique legal aspects in the franchisor/franchisee relationship, he says.

“For example, many states have specific laws governing franchises which address such issues as how a franchise agreement may be terminated and whether and to what extent non-compete clauses may be enforced,” Buck says.

“It's extremely rewarding to assist clients with creative ideas that will ultimately be franchised and expanded to different markets.”