

## JAY ROLLINS

SCHWARTZ ROLLINS

James E. “Jay” Rollins Jr. of Schwartz Rollins pressed the board of the Georgia Chapter of the National Employment Lawyers Association to create a formal mentoring program a few years ago.

The program pairs seasoned employment attorneys one-on-one with less experienced attorneys in the field to explore topics such as prelitigation, starting a case, discovery, taking a deposition, trying a case and what to do if you have to file an appeal.

Rollins and NELA ultimately partnered with leaders of the State Bar of Georgia’s Labor & Employment Section to create an annual mentorship academy. Last year, nearly 50 mentors and mentees from about 30 different firms and organizations gathered at The Center for Civil and Human Rights to celebrate the first class of graduates.

One mentee, attorney Tamika Sykes, said this about Rollins: “He embodies the saying, ‘Getting the most out of life is not about how much you keep for yourself but how much you pour into others.’ Jay Rollins is the heart of mentoring.”

### ■ WHO WAS ONE OF YOUR MOST IMPORTANT MENTORS, AND WHAT WAS THAT RELATIONSHIP LIKE?

I’ve had a lot of great mentors in my career, but by far the most important mentor was Judge Duross Fitzpatrick. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to clerk for Judge Fitzpatrick directly after law school. My father passed away during my first year of law school, and Judge Fitzpatrick was an incredible guiding force during a rather difficult time in my life. He was a true gentleman and scholar. He taught me the importance of giving back to the legal profession and being guided by the highest standards of professionalism and ethics.



### ■ WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO MAINTAINING A MENTOR-MENTEE RELATIONSHIP?

Time. We are all busy—trying to build a practice, maintain a practice, keep up with our cases, service our clients and have a personal life. At the end of the day, despite our best intentions, mentoring often make its way to the bottom of our task list and finds a permanent home there.

Mentoring requires commitment on the part of both parties. Once you make a true commitment to mentoring and establishing and fostering a relationship, the rewards are well worth the effort, for both the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring is not a one-way street; it is a partnership. ■