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FIGHTING TO PROTECT HOMEBUYERS



For most people, buying a home is a huge investment. They don't want to leave anything to chance, and thanks to Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, they don't have to.

ATG was established 50 years ago by Urbana attorneys Stanley B. Balbach, Richard L. Thies and Charles M. Webber in the belief that that the buyers and sellers would be better served with lawyer involvement. Who better to sell title insurance policies than the attorneys who already represented buyers and sellers in transactions?

The concept took off, and now, ATG has nearly 4,000 lawyer-members in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana. Collectively, they have presided over nearly three million home closings, providing homebuyers with competitively-priced title insurance. Purchased at the closing for a one-time fee, title insurance protects the buyer against errors or omissions in deeds, mistakes in records and forgery.

At the ATG helm today is Peter J. Birnbaum, a Chicago native who joined the fledging company while still in law school. He rose through the ranks and in 1991, was promoted to CEO.

Under Birnbaum's leadership, ATG has not only grown dramatically as a company but has become known as a staunch supporter of numerous charitable endeavors, including the Illinois Bar Foundation, Mercy Housing, Urban Initiatives, University of Illinois College of Law, IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, and many area bar associations.

Birnbaum has developed an impressive record of public service in his own right. He is a past president of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago, and he and his wife Juliet have served as a Big Brother and Big Sister for the past 16 years. He is also president of The Jesse White Foundation where he leads an effort to build the Jesse White Community Center.

Recognized time and again for his leadership in the bar and philanthropic arenas, Birnbaum was inducted in 2011 as a Laureate in the ISBA's prestigious Academy of Illinois Lawyers. In October 2014, he will be honored once again. This time, the Illinois Bar Foundation – the ISBA's charitable arm – will present him with its Distinguished Award for Excellence at its annual gala fundraiser in Chicago.

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