There is symmetry, according to Orlando attorney Darryl Bloodworth, between a professional athlete and a lawyer.

Bloodworth, president of Orlando-based Dean Mead, recently made the analogy while discussing the law firm’s 25th anniversary. Bloodworth should know. His late father, Jimmy Bloodworth, played professional baseball during the 40s and 50s. Jimmy Bloodworth was one of the Philadelphia Phillies’ “Whiz Kids” during that team’s race for the pennant in 1950.

Instead of a grand slam, however, Bloodworth and his partners have stepped up to the plate and hit a home run for justice.

“Florida has been good to us,” Bloodworth said, as he reflected on his firm’s history. So good, that all 29 Dean Mead shareholders recently pledged their support for greater access to justice by becoming a Florida Bar Foundation Fellow. Bloodworth personally recruited 21 of the shareholders; the other eight had already been Fellows. “We were looking for a way to celebrate 25 years,” Bloodworth said. “We wanted to give something back.”

That sentiment was echoed by Jay Van Heyde, another Dean Mead shareholder: “It is our duty as lawyers and as a firm to give something back and to share our successes from the practice of law with those who need the support of the very legal system from which we draw our wealth and good fortune.”

Although Bloodworth, who grew up in Apalachicola, spends a lot of his time in the courtroom, litigating high-profile cases, he wasn’t always so “grounded.”

When Bloodworth graduated in 1964 from the United States Air Force Academy, he became a pilot. For nearly six years, Bloodworth flew T-38s—and instructed other pilots how to fly the birds. It was fun, Bloodworth said, and remembers the thrill of going from “release brakes on the runway to 40,000 feet in 3.5 minutes.”
But Bloodworth decided to forego a career in aviation for something a little more grounded, and enrolled in law school at the University of Florida.

Bloodworth, who served as the Foundation’s president in 2002, said he became interested in championing the cause for legal aid while he was a law student. Then, Bloodworth was one of two editors for the groundbreaking Levinson Report. The purpose of the 1970 study was to improve the availability of legal assistance to the poor.

“It piqued my interest,” Bloodworth said.

One of the suggestions of the Levinson Report was to increase pro bono activity by the state’s lawyers. After graduating from the University of Florida, Bloodworth had a chance to do that in private practice in Orlando before helping form the law firm that would eventually become Dean Mead.

Bloodworth also served as president of the Orange County Bar Association, and helped to establish what was then GOALS (the Greater Orlando Area Legal Aid Society).

Bloodworth’s association with The Florida Bar Foundation began about the same time as well, he said.

In 1981, the Florida Supreme Court decision established IOTA, and the Foundation was tapped to be the distributor of the funds for legal aid and other charitable purposes. The Foundation had an upstairs office at the OCBA, with two staff members—the executive director, Jane Curran, and a secretary.

“I was Jane Curran’s landlord,” Bloodworth laughed. Jane Curran, a nationally known figure in the world of IOLTA funding, is the Foundation’s first and only executive director. Bloodworth said his close proximity to the Foundation allowed him to keep abreast of the happenings in the organization.

“Lawyers that don’t know what the Foundation does, do not read the Bar News,” Bloodworth said. “In recent years, the Foundation has put a lot of effort into educating attorneys about the good works done by the Foundation.”

Mason Blake, another Dean Mead shareholder, said he agrees with Bloodworth’s assessment of the Foundation. “Providing legal assistance to the poor and improving the
administration of justice are fundamental obligations of every person who has the
privilege to practice law,” Blake said. “Contributing to The Florida Bar Foundation is one
of the ways I have chosen to fulfill this responsibility. I have great trust in the
commitment of The Florida Bar Foundation to accomplish its mission with the effective
use of donated funds.”

Other shareholders in the firm, like Dennis Corrick, donated $1,000 to the
Foundation’s Endowment Trust because of the good return on the investment. Dennis
Corrick, who entered law school at the age of 35, said his role of being a “non-
traditional” law student put a different perspective on the duties of those engaged in the
legal profession.

“In my previous life,” Corrick said, “I saw firsthand how many people struggle in
today’s society just to survive.”

Corrick went on to practice real estate and land use law, and continued to work
pro bono on cases as needed. However, Corrick added, “My expertise is so far from the
family law and other areas that people need, that I don’t feel it’s the best way for me to
contribute. I have received much from Florida, and I felt that the Foundation, with its
support for various areas of need, was a sound way to give something back to the citizens
of Florida.”

The money generated by the contributions of Bloodworth and his partners will go
into the Foundation’s Endowment Trust. The Trust was established in 1991 after
decaying interest rates significantly decreased the amount of legal aid grants.

At about the same time, Bloodworth, then Florida Bar president Terrence Russell
and Rep. J. Dudley Goodlette began lobbying for the Florida Access to Civil Legal
Assistance Act.

“Terry Russell and I were in the governor’s office when he signed the original Act
[in 2002],” Bloodworth said. Just a few months ago, Gov. Bush struck a line from a bill
that would have added $5 million to funding for legal aid. “I was quite surprised when he
vetoed it,” Bloodworth said. “I have to assume he is still supportive of the Act, and we
are certainly hopeful that he won’t veto appropriations next year.”

Bloodworth is also hopeful that other Florida law firm shareholders will follow
Dean Mead’s example by becoming Foundation Fellows.
“We are proud of The Florida Bar Foundation and the leadership it has been able to provide,” Bloodworth said. “We agreed that all shareholders would become a Fellow, and we hope it will be a challenge for other firms to do likewise.”

Shareholder Steve Dunegan, whose reasons for becoming a Foundation Fellow mirrored that of his colleagues, also had a different reason for supporting the Endowment Trust: “I think it’s cool that we have 100 percent participation.”

Dean Mead’s Florida Bar Foundation Fellows:
Matthew Ahearn
Vicki Berman
R. Mason Blake
Darryl M. Bloodworth
Stephen J. Bozarth
Jane Callahan
Albert Capouano
Marc Chapman
Elias Chotas
Dennis G. Corrick
Alan Daniels
Lauren Young Detzel
Stephen Dunegan
Charles Henry Egerton
Paul M. Goldman
Stanley Gravenmier
David A. Gunter
Lynn Hinson
Gregory K. Lawrence
Mark R. Leavitt
Steven C. Lee
Stephen R. Looney
Tracy J. Mabry
Robert William Mead, Jr.
Michael D. Minton
Nichole M. Mooney
Kimberly Bonder Rezanka
Joseph John Van Heyde II
Joel C. Zwemer