

Internship changed her life

As a law school student at the University of Florida, **Ruth Ann Hepler** thought she wanted to be a criminal prosecutor; and applied for an internship with the state attorney's office.

But she was awarded an internship with the public defender's office instead, working on criminal defenses, and it changed her life.

"I thought, 'This is amazing, I love it,'" she recalled in the law office of Sullivan and Hepler on Blanding Boulevard, where she is a partner. "It totally changed my world view."

This year promises to be a busy one for Hepler; who has been appointed to the **Florida Supreme Court Committee on Standing Jury Instructions in Criminal Cases**. The committee will begin meeting in Tampa in March to update guidelines on jury instructions, which have to be adjusted to correspond to new and changing laws.

And she is also looking forward to the publication next month of her book "The State of Florida v. You: The Accused's Guide to Defending a Florida DUI Charge."

The book is written for people who have been charged with driving under the influence and it explains their rights under the law and how they can defend themselves.

After graduating from the UF law school in 1991, Hepler went to work for the Public Defender's Office in Jacksonville, and later ran her own criminal defense firm. She joined Michael P. Sullivan's firm in August 2008, where she specializes in her first love, criminal defense, and representing social security disability cases.

Hepler grew up in Panama City and earned an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Missouri in 1988. She is married to Carey Hepler; and they have three girls: 16-year-old Janie, Patti, 14, and Sally, who is 13.



PHOTO AND
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