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ALM

Associate pictures trapeze hobby as recruiting event



JAMIE RECTOR

GREATEST OF EASE: When she's not at work, Sheppard, Mullin associate Heather Cooper learns stunts.

By Kellie Schmitt
RECORDER STAFF WRITER

When associate Heather Cooper has a tough work week, she releases stress by flying through the air.

Cooper, a fourth year at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton, has taken up trapeze classes at Hollywood Aerial Arts, an activity she says is a great complement to her day job as an antitrust attorney.

"It really is a high wire balancing act, like the practice of law often is, too. And so it keeps me on my toes and certainly helps keep me agile," she said, moving her hands upward to demonstrate how to hang from the bar. "You have to let go of your fears."

Participants jump off a 35-foot outdoor platform and swing from a bar through the air, performing flips with a porous net under-

neath to catch any falls. (Cooper hasn't sustained any injuries and said it's rare.) From the top of the board, the trapeze artists can see the surrounding rooftops, airplanes landing at the Los Angeles International Airport, and the Hollywood Park racetrack below.

Cooper met her boyfriend at Aerial Arts, and is trying to develop a client from her classes, an executive at a seafood distributing company.

She's also working to recruit fellow Sheppard, Mullin attorneys — as well as the wife of her practice group leader — to join the action.

And this summer she's hoping to invite the summer associates along as one of her firm's recruitment activities.

Along with trapeze work, Cooper also enjoys an "aerial tissu" class, where people swing from silk fabrics, twisting, tumbling

and flipping.

"It takes nerves of steel, which is a good trait for an antitrust attorney to possess, especially one who deals with government prosecutions, class action[s] and the like," Cooper said.

Keeping fit on the trapeze bar also helps keep Cooper's mood bright even when she's drowning in office work, she said. With classes at 8 p.m. on weeknights and 10 a.m. on Saturdays, it's convenient to fit them into her work schedule.

The other students' ages range from 13 to 90 and cover a span of professions. Cooper, who is a former college gymnast, said those skills help her performance, but aren't a requirement.

"I look forward to flying every week," she said. "It might not be what most people consider fun, but I love it."