It’s not easy for attorneys to both thrive in litigation and dedicate themselves to community and pro bono service. But Karoline Carstens, an attorney with Alton, Illinois-based Simmons Hanly Conroy, has managed this feat.

Carstens, a lawyer in asbestos and mesothelioma litigation, has earned the respect of her clients and peers for her talents in the courtroom and her unwavering dedication to earning the best results for the people she represents.

She has also earned a reputation as an attorney who is committed to giving back to both her profession and her community. Carstens is known for the amount of pro bono work she regularly takes on and for volunteering for a range of community organizations.

It’s little wonder, then, that Carstens is one of the most respected attorneys in her community. In recognition of her accomplishments, she was recently honored with the Young Lawyer of the Year Award by the Illinois State Bar Association.

“Karoline is one of the rare attorneys who is both likable and tough,” said Douglas Sinars with Chicago’s Sinars Rollins, LLC. “We are on the opposite end of the bar. Karoline is a formidable opponent in that she has excelled in the prosecution of all aspects of her cases, despite her young age.”

The work that Carstens does involves extensive discovery to uncover the misdeeds of large corporations regarding the dangers of asbestos and esoteric science that can be a challenge to master. But Carstens has consistently displayed a deft personal touch while discovering information about clients that other attorneys usually overlook.

“She is innovative with these facts to develop novel legal theories to benefit her clients,” Sinars said. “While this can be a frustrating experience as her opponent, Karoline’s professional and friendly manner commands respect and makes one like her on a personal level.”

Sinars points to a recent case. Carstens deposed the representative of a corporation that Sinars represents. The client told Sinars that Carstens made him comfortable, and made him think in a story-like fashion. This meant that the client recalled more information than during previous depositions with other counsel.

“There are many attorneys who can write motions or present a decent oral argument. It is a rare attorney who has the instinct to understand and relate to all manner of people, as does Karoline,” Sinars said.

Others praise Carstens for her pro bono and community service work. Lois Wood, executive director of Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, said that Carstens has long been a key supporter of her organization, which serves low-income and senior residents of 65 counties in central and southern Illinois.

Wood said that Carstens has been an active member of the Young Friends of Land of Lincoln group since its inception in 2013. She co-chaired the CLE/networking events presented by the group in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The 2014 CLE, “What Judges Wish Lawyers Knew,” was a huge success, Wood said, with Carstens responsible for much of it. The event attracted 68 attorneys.

“We are very grateful to have someone as dedicated and talented as Karoline Carstens on the Young Friends of Land of Lincoln Committee,” Wood said.