

THE LEGAL OUTLOOK

June 2016 | Volume 8 | Issue 6

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“We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race.”

Kofi Annan

Joseph Messa completes year-long tenure as Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association President



Last Tuesday, June 14th, during a meeting at the Sofitel Hotel in Center City, Joseph L. Messa, Jr. handed over leadership of the **Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association (PTLA)** to incoming President, Ezra Wohlgernter, a personal injury attorney in Philadelphia.

June 30th marks the end of Mr. Messa’s year-long tenure as President of the longest standing trial lawyers association in the United States. Joe Messa achieved a great deal for the association and for the rights of citizens in Philadelphia, PA during that time, but the crowning achievement of Mr. Messa’s leadership has to be the landmark election of three pro-civil justice judges to Pennsylvania’s highest court in November of 2015. Messa spearheaded a major push throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to not only encourage citizens to vote, but to vote for the three candidates who would preserve the rights of Pennsylvanians to jury trials and compensation for years to come. In a landslide victory, Judge Kevin Dougherty, Judge Christine Donohue, and Judge David Wecht were elected to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and access to the courts in PA has never been safer.

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NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH 2016

The National Safety Council (NSC) sponsors National Safety Month annually during the month of June. The council, along with a number of additional organizations throughout the US, focus their efforts in June on reducing leading causes of injury and death in the home, in the workplace, and on the road.

This year's focuses for National Safety Month are prescription painkiller abuse, transportation safety, drowning, and elder safety. The theme is **#Save4Life**. The NSC hopes to encourage safe behavior and precautionary habits based on the surprising statistics that surround these dangers.

- The #1 preventable death for children age 1 to 4 is drowning. The NSC urges caretakers to stay with children around water at all times.
- The #1 cause of death in teenagers is car crashes. The NSC urges parents and educators to practice as much as they can with teenagers who are learning to drive.
- Everyday, 52 people die from prescription painkillers. The NSC urges patients to NEVER share painkillers .
- The #1 cause of preventable deaths in older Americans is falls. The NSC urges older Americans and their family members to install mats and handrails for easier moving through the home.

If you want to learn more, visit www.nsc.org to sign up for their free mailing list. The NSC will provide you with free e-mails to help keep you up-to-date on how to keep yourself and your family safe.

#Safe4Life

Joseph Messa, cont'd

During his final address as President, Mr. Messa thanked his mentors, fellow PTLA members, attorneys and staff members at Messa & Associates, and his parents, who fostered his unique skill for leadership from an early age.

Mr. Messa also discussed the auto limits bill that has successfully passed the PA Senate and is currently awaiting final approval. The bill would raise auto-insurance limits in Pennsylvania for the first time in 40 years, finally allowing PA motorists injured by under-insured negligent drivers to receive full recoveries.

It's very obvious that Mr. Messa takes great pride in the association and the work they do for the citizens of Pennsylvania, saying,

"This is the greatest trial lawyers association on the planet because we all stand together to fight our common enemies ... those who would limit or take away our citizens' right to justice - whether the mother who lost a child in a fire due to a defective product, the young man who lost his limbs due to negligent medical care, or the worker who can no longer support his family because of dangerous conditions on a job site."

But it's much more than his words that tell you how much Mr. Messa actually believes in the mission of the PTLA. He has dedicated his life, not just for the past year, but for every year since he graduated law school, to fighting for those who can not fight for themselves. His mission to give a voice to those silenced by negligence is carried out every day, under his guidance, by the attorneys and staff at Messa & Associates, P.C.

The PTLA made huge strides in the last year under the leadership of Joseph Messa and Ezra Wohlgeleinter, having had the last year to observe and assist Mr. Messa, is poised to effectively lead the Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association through another year of citizen-focused achievement.

SETTLEMENTS & VERDICTS



Suzanne H. dePillis secured for her client a **\$750,000 settlement** as a result of a medical negligence claim filed in Cape May County, New Jersey after the patient was discharged from the hospital with a life-threatening bowel obstruction. The patient had presented to the ER with abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting, and though tests results confirmed the obstruction, he was sent home without treatment. Almost two weeks later, he returned to the hospital via ambulance in respiratory failure and septic shock from a perforated bowel. After surgery and more than two weeks in the ICU, he still required several additional surgeries and rehabilitation that would not have been necessary if he had been properly treated.

BREAKING IT DOWN:

STAYING CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY

■ **By Justin L. Groen**

When I was growing up, my grandfather taught me a valuable lesson. He said, "Do not remove yourself from the community." As a child, I didn't know just how valuable this lesson was. Today, however, I'm very much aware of its impact in my life and in the lives of those around me.

Importance of Community

When you remove yourself from the community, everyone suffers. This is because a community works to protect its members from preventable harm and seeks to ensure everyone's safety and health. Although the attorneys and staff at Messa & Associates come from varying backgrounds with divergent worldviews, community is important to all of us.

Every claim we file results from someone failing another member of our community. Maybe a radiologist failed to look closely at an x-ray; a driver was text messaging while driving; or a business owner never fixed their broken sidewalk. No matter the failure, all of our clients' injuries could have, and should have, been prevented.

At Messa & Associates we strive to obtain justice on behalf of our injured clients. However, we also work with the same zeal to protect our community from known dangers and injustice. We join in lobbying efforts in Harrisburg and Trenton to ensure protections for injured victims. We serve on organizational boards and statewide

committees. We participate in fund raising efforts to ensure that victim and patient advocates serve on our States' judiciaries. Our firm's intent is *constant*. We strive to protect our clients from injury through appropriate legislation and advocacy while remaining mindful to provide a voice for our clients while they seek justice for their injuries.



What Can I Do for My Community?

Upon reflection, I realized that I needed to be more active in my own community, so I joined my local town watch. I volunteer with another member of our neighborhood and walk the streets of our community hoping to make a small difference. We knock on doors if garage doors are left open or keys are left in locks outside. We walk with people walking their dogs and talk to neighbors sitting on their steps. Rather than removing ourselves from the community or hiding inside the four walls of our home, we actively insert

ourselves into the community, knowing that with each deed performed, our community is strengthened.

Mother Teresa said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."

MessaLaw Supports the Community

Every summer, Messa & Associates sponsors a Back-to-School Bash to donate back packs filled with school supplies to 1,000 students. Every winter, we have a toy drive, and we adopt a family need to ensure that children in our community enjoy the holiday season. As a firm, we seek to ensure that our community is stronger as a result of our involvement.

How Can YOU Help Your Community?

Please, join us this summer and volunteer in your neighborhood. Only a few hours repairing a playground, cleaning a park, or planting a tree can help us reach our goal of strengthening and protecting our community.



Justin L. Groen (jgroen@messalaw.com) is a trial attorney practicing in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, focusing much of his practice on complex personal injury litigation, primarily working with victims of medical malpractice, defective products, and other forms of serious negligence.

FUTURE LEADERS LOBBY DAY



On May 23, 2016, the **Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association (PTLA)** hosted a *Future Leaders Lobby Day* in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. PTLA President, Joe Messa, and President Elect, Ezra Wohlgelemer, accompanied 12 young lawyers (including Angelo Theodosopoulos of Messa & Associates, P.C.) to Harrisburg to introduce them to lawmakers in the Commonwealth Capitol and to educate them in lobbying. The young lawyers participated in a lobby training and legislative update session with PTLA lobbyists Tom Previc

and Dave Tyler, followed by three hours with lawmakers, lobbying *against* HB 1064 and HB 1428. House bill 1064, an amendment to the *Medical Care Availability and Reduction of Error (Mcare) Act*, aims to provide legal immunity to medical providers of emergency medical services, which would have a severely negative impact on the rights of patients injured by medical malpractice in the ER. House bill 1428, or the *Fairness in Claims and Transparency Act*, aims to make it more difficult for asbestos victims in PA

(which ranks 3rd in the nation for asbestos-related deaths) to file claims and receive compensation for injuries related to asbestos. Angelo Theodosopoulos said of his experience in Harrisburg, *"The trip was a sobering reminder of the import role that we play in the lives of our clients beyond the confines of offices and Courtrooms. We must be persistent in the fight against legislation that aims to close the courthouse doors to injured victims of negligence."*

MAIN LOCATIONS

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