

# Family Law

BALANCING COMPASSION AND TENACITY

The attorneys at Charny, Karpousis, Altieri & Donoian, P.A. guide their clients through a difficult time in their lives with strong advocacy, empathy and care.

by MATT COSENTINO



KAREN ROSE KARPOUSIS



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NICOLE DONOIAN-PODY

it is about problem solving. As family law attorneys, our job is not to make somebody's life worse. We understand that and work hard to send the family off as best as we can into their future."

No matter which way a case is proceeding, clients can rest assured knowing their attorneys will be with them every step of the way.

"We're all working moms and this profession is not a 9 to 5 job," Altieri says. "We are often working after hours taking calls and assisting clients during 'off' hours. This is especially true for busy professionals and someone like a schoolteacher or physician who is unable to speak during the day. If clients contact us on the weekend (and they often do), we're available for them. They aren't waiting until Monday morning if an emergency has arisen on Saturday; we

get back to them and address their needs.

"One of the things that sets us apart is our resolute commitment to clients and our availability when they need us."

The firm's influence extends to the surrounding community as well. All three partners are sought-after speakers and involved in various professional organizations.

Charitable efforts are also integral to the firm's mission. The firm attorneys have volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House of Southern New Jersey cooking breakfast for families, participated in walks for Parkinson's disease and the Alzheimer's Association, and this year they are doing a book drive for BookSmiles. Karpousis and attorneys Rebecca Berger and Erika Goldberg volunteer at the Alice Paul Institute as mentors for young women. The firm's attorneys are committed to doing pro bono work

through South Jersey Legal Services.

"We are involved in family law and take it seriously, wanting to help families in any way we can, whether it's through professional organizations or community service," Karpousis says.

Ultimately, that is the foundation for Charny, Karpousis, Altieri & Donoian. Divorce or other family law cases are commonly life-altering situations, and helping clients navigate the process toward the best possible outcome is always personally fulfilling.

"That's exactly why I chose this area of the law, and I think that's why we all chose it," Karpousis adds. "We want to make a positive difference and we are doing that. With our honesty, advocacy and guidance, we are making the most personal and often most difficult situation easier for our clients by listening and understanding their individual needs." ■

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The concerns that immediately spring to mind can seem overwhelming.

Of course, nobody wants to see a marriage fall apart. But when the promise of a loving union fades away and divorce is inevitable, important questions will arise. Who will get custody of the children? When will the other parent be allowed to see the kids? Who is going to pay the mortgage?

To find the answers, it is imperative to rely on a law firm that has years of experience in every aspect of family law and is also tenacious in its advocacy. At the same time, the attorneys need to have the compassion and patience to help their clients through one of the most trying times in their lives—one that impacts every family member. It is a delicate balance.

Charny, Karpousis, Altieri & Donoian, P.A., is the premier boutique law firm in South Jersey concentrating on family law. Specializing in every facet of the field—including divorce, custody, child support, alimony, domestic violence, pre-nuptial agreements, mediation and equitable distribution—the firm's attorneys have the litigation and negotiation skills to handle family law cases of varying complexity while also providing the personal attention their clients deserve.

"We have to be good listeners, understand our clients' goals and recognize

their concerns," says Nicole Donoian-Pody, one of three partners leading the firm along with Karen Rose Karpousis and Michelle F. Altieri.

"Our job is to interpret how the law applies to their unique situation and explain how their goals and concerns fit within the law. Every case is different."

"There isn't one specific type of client we serve," Karpousis says. "Our clientele is diverse—we effectively and efficiently represent business owners, professionals, W-2 wage earners and dependent spouses."

Karpousis, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers-Camden School of Law, has been practicing family law since 1992. Donoian-Pody, a graduate of Rutgers-Camden School of Business and Widener School of Law, has 17 years of experience, while Altieri has been a family law attorney for 18 years after graduating with honors from Rowan University and Widener School of Law.

As dedicated professionals who are also committed to their own families, the three partners come from large law firms where they were trained by the most seasoned professionals. They now use this expertise to aggressively represent their clients and provide the practical guidance that comes from managing families as well.

"That is critical to us," Altieri says. "All

three of us came from bigger law firms and have benefited by years of mentoring with the best lawyers in our profession. We bring that to our practice. We're also all working moms raising children so we're very empathetic to parents who are trying to raise their families but unfortunately going through a difficult situation. That's something on a personal level that we bring to our clients."

While it is common for many divorce cases to be settled, the firm is thoroughly prepared to litigate and go to trial if necessary. Mediation is another frequently used method of resolving a divorce, custody matter or other family dispute, and Karpousis, Donoian-Pody and of counsel attorney Nancy Gold are all certified mediators with significant experience and success in that realm.

"Over the last decade mediation has become far more important to the court system as well as attorneys and litigants," Donoian-Pody says. "It allows people to have some control over the outcome of their case. Because mediation is a confidential process, both parties can speak very candidly about their goals and concerns. Mediation also allows our clients to save time and money and avoid the financial and emotional stress that comes with a trial. Finger pointing and laying blame are not part of mediation;

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