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COVER STORY

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Tom Kline and Shanin Specter of Kline & Specter On Achieving Some of Pennsylvania's Largest Verdicts

Since its inception in 1995, the plaintiffs' trial firm Kline & Specter has become an institution in Pennsylvania for those seeking redress following a catastrophe.

"People come to us because they want the best chance for a just financial recovery," notes Shanin Specter. Tom Kline adds: "And the best way to guarantee that is to hire somebody with an excellent track record of courtroom results."

Kline and Specter and their firm of 35 lawyers are known for just that, having consistently achieved seven-, eight-, and nine-figure personal injury verdicts over the past three decades. Most recently, Specter secured a \$109 million jury verdict in Allegheny County—the largest verdict in a personal injury case in Pennsylvania history—for the family of a 39-year-old mother of two who was killed in her yard by a fallen power line. And, Kline, defying the odds of the Pennsylvania municipal liability cap, most recently obtained a \$14 million jury verdict for a young amputee in Bucks County.

Specter notes: "The family was up against a public utility company. That's not a fair fight unless you have a lawyer and a law firm behind you with the resources and jury verdict record to level the playing field."



Shanin Specter

Not only did Specter achieve a substantial verdict in this case, he also made a complaint to the state's Public Utility Commission regarding West Penn Power's defective power lines. In response, the state brought an enforcement action against the power company.

"Without our firm's investigation, the government wouldn't have known about the dangerous condition of these power lines," observes Specter, whose work previously prompted hospital reforms and product recalls, as well as new safety guidelines for the Philadelphia Police Department.

Specter adds, "While our primary mission is to represent people who are facing crushing burdens, we also seek to improve public safety, which in this case meant forcing the company to fix its power lines and retrain its linemen."

Kline—who won his first multimillion-dollar verdict in a product liability case involving the defective Dalkon Shield intrauterine device back in 1983—won the \$14 million award against the Pennsbury School District for a teenage student who lost her leg when she

was run over by a school bus. Kline is currently challenging the constitutionality of the \$500,000 municipal cap in Pennsylvania, which limits his client's recovery.

Kline explains: "A conservative county jury in this case saw that this woman had suffered a life-altering injury, and they were concerned with compensating her properly. So hopefully we can overturn this draconian limitation on damages to ensure that she receives a fair award."



Kline's work in the case recalls his handling of the 1999 *Hall v. SEPTA* case, which resulted in a \$51 million verdict for a 4-year-old boy whose foot was torn off in a subway escalator. "That was another case where at issue was the legal limit of the cap in Pennsylvania," Kline notes. "In that case we were successful in obtaining much more than the cap, as well as getting the transit authority to upgrade all of its escalators to include safety devices. We needed to accomplish all of this in a courtroom, not a conference room."

Kline currently represents a man known as Victim 5 in the Jerry Sandusky scandal, and he has emerged as a national spokesperson for the victims of Jerry Sandusky. He has been interviewed on many local and national television programs, which have collectively reached more than 100 million viewers.

Given their courtroom track records, Kline and Specter have received many accolades from their peers. They are both members of the Inner Circle of Advocates, an invitation-only group that selects the top 100 plaintiffs' lawyers in the nation. They have also been selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*®. In addition, their firm has been ranked Tier 1 nationally by *U.S. News–Best Lawyers*® "Best Law Firms" in multiple areas.

Tom Kline and Shanin Specter have a shared interest in everything from sports to charitable endeavors, which includes the Kline & Specter Squash Courts at Drexel University and the Kline & Specter Courtroom at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. In all, their firm and its attorneys have contributed to more than 100 charities.

"We feel it's very important to give back to the community," Kline says. And, Specter adds: "There are so many unmet needs in our society, especially with the economic downturn, so we're honored to be able to make some impact there as well." ■