



Kline & Specter Eletter - March 2022

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Bezar, Marks get \$5.05 million for sexual assault victim



Bezar



Marks

Nadeem Bezar and Emily Marks achieved a \$5.05 million settlement with a Philadelphia-area child welfare agency for a girl who was sexually assaulted by her foster father. A lawsuit had alleged that Delta Community Supports Inc. and Delta Family Services, LLC had failed to ensure that the young girl would be safe with her foster family and neglected to follow up on their own recommendation that a mental health provider look into suspicions that the girl was

being abused. That recommendation was made after the girl, at just seven years old, had exhibited behavior common among sexual assault victims. She seemed to lack physical boundaries, engaged in inappropriate touching and asked questions of a sexual nature. It was not until several years later, and after her foster father was no longer present in the home, that the girl, who was not identified in the lawsuit, revealed that he had sexually abused her over several years. An investigation led to the foster father being criminally charged and his guilty plea on charges of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse with a child, aggravated indecent assault of a child, and corruption of a minor. In an interview with *The Legal Intelligencer*, Bezar said he faced a number of challenges in the case, including piecing together facts that had occurred a decade ago. "It's very sad how much badness there is out there," Bezar told the newspaper. "If anything, you just hope

that these resolutions allow these young adults to find some hope out there and maybe have an opportunity to do good things or great things with their lives.”

Paznokas pro bono effort wins verdict

In a pro bono case, **Michelle Paznokas** won a \$250,000 bench verdict – including approximately \$54,000 in punitive damages – in a case involving deed theft, a rampant and often overlooked problem in Philadelphia. Paznokas, along with Rachel Lopez and Lauren Katz Smith from the Thomas R. Kline School of Law’s Andy and Gwen Stern Community Lawyering Clinic, represented two adult siblings whose signatures were forged on the deed to their family home following the death of their mother. After the defendants recorded the deed and took possession of the property, they gutted the home, discarded the plaintiffs’ personal belongings and locked out one daughter who had lived in the home for 40 years. Then the property was sold. In the case, which had lasted several years, liability was established before trial via summary judgment, default judgment, and stipulations. At trial, plaintiffs’ counsel sought compensatory damages for loss of personal property, taxes paid on the home and costs for litigation and displacement. Punitive damages were sought for the character of the defendants’ bad actions, the nature and extent of the harm, and ability to pay by the defendants, a mother and son who had orchestrated the theft.



Paznokas

NY Times Investigative report features Kline, Present in case involving PA state trooper



Kline



Present

A lawsuit filed by **Tom Kline** and **Ben Present** was prominently featured in an investigative article by *The New York Times* about a Pennsylvania state trooper who fatally shot four people, which the newspaper termed “an extraordinary tally for an officer responsible for patrolling largely rural areas with low rates of violent crime.” Kline and Present filed suit in federal court in a 2020 case that involved one of the shootings – the killing of 42-year-old Charity

Thome, of Jackson Township in central Pennsylvania. Thome was shot in her car in Lebanon County, near Harrisburg. The civil suit on behalf of the Thome family cites a violation of her civil rights. *The Times* noted that state police regulations call for trying to “calm/de-escalate” situations involving people with mental illness and to “assume a quiet, non-threatening manner.” Kline told *The Times*: “Their job was to talk her out of the vehicle and into safety. And instead, they did just the opposite, which was to fire multiple rounds of bullets into her pinned-down vehicle, leaving

her defenseless and tragically dead.” The newspaper said interviews and examination of records “found inconsistencies between the evidence of what occurred and what the state police said had happened.” ([Read the article](#))

Kline & Specter attorneys sue over suicides



Kline

Bosworth

Cavaliere

Tom Kline, Tom Bosworth and Michael Cavaliere are working on two cases featured in a lengthy investigative front page article in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* concerning the deaths of two patients at Episcopal hospital of apparent suicides. In one, Angelique Benrahou, was admitted to the psychiatric hospital suffering from behavioral problems and was supposed to have been placed under a suicide watch in which she would be checked every 15 minutes. But, according to a lawsuit filed by her parents, she went unobserved at one point for nearly 45 minutes during which she attempted suicide. While she did not die immediately, she was seriously injured and taken off life support on March 8, 2020. Later in

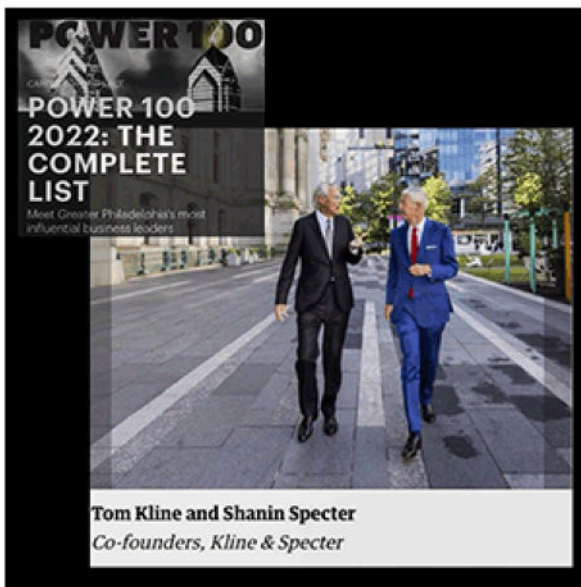


the same year, a male patient hanged himself from a shower curtain rod, and again, on Dec. 10, Robert Davis III, a 33 -year-old patient, threw himself from a third-floor window to his death. Kline & Specter attorneys are representing the Benrahou and Davis families. *The Inquirer* article mentioned staffing issues, falsified documents and other problems at Episcopal, which was purchased in 1998 by Temple University Hospital and converted into a psychiatric hospital. ([Read the complete article](#))

Kline, Specter named to Power 100

Tom Kline and Shanin Specter were named to the *Philadelphia Business Journal's* 2022 “Power 100” list comprised of the newspaper’s selection of the most influential people in the region.

The list includes CEOs of some of the area’s largest corporations, university presidents, leading bureaucrats (but not elected politicians), top lawyers, best chefs and executives of sports teams. The *Business Journal* does not rank the 100, simply lists them in alphabetical order. The paper’s editorial team considered not only people who hold powerful positions, but also those



who are helping to lead a path forward within their industries. It noted the list is intended to go beyond just a "who's who of CEOs," with the choice made across a variety of sectors "holding important roles in the Philadelphia economy."

Bezar opposes bill at Harrisburg hearing

Nadeem Bezar appeared before a Pennsylvania House of Representatives committee to speak against legislation that proposes capping at \$500,000 verdicts against non-profit agencies for physically abused children. An outspoken advocate for young abuse victims, he told members of the Children & Youth Committee that H.B. 2213 is "a dangerous proposal that further harms children who have already



been harmed or killed." Bezar testified on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association for Justice that to deprive children harmed while receiving care from non-profit foster care, adoption services, residential care or during treatment would violate the rights of society's most vulnerable citizens. The legislation would not apply to private agencies. Bezar testified that the cap would apply to any child suffering abuse that is not sexual in nature, including abuse such as shaken-baby syndrome, any physical or mental abuse, deprivation of care and malnutrition. "Let's set aside this bill," he implored, "and work together to ensure the tragedies that occur to children in and by these facilities and organizations don't happen again. Let's make Pennsylvania safer for all children, regardless of where or how they were hurt." ([Watch a clip](#))

Specter on Ukraine: Time for a settlement

In an opinion piece written for *Smerconish* (3/11), **Shanin Specter** opined that after weeks of war

in Ukraine it was time to settle the conflict. Titled “The Path to Peace in Ukraine,” Specter wrote that both Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proved their resolve but that both sides were sustaining heavy losses, both the loss of life and treasure. Russia’s economy crumbles because of United States and NATO sanctions, yet the West has not given Ukraine the full military support it wants. “Ukraine has courage but not force. NATO has force but not courage,” wrote Specter. He added: “Ukraine has proven that eventually Russian forces will be evicted from Ukraine ... Ukrainians will fight for as long as it takes to evict the Russians. The only question is when and at what cost. By now, Putin knows this.” But Zelensky, wrote Specter, also knows that he needs a deal to stem the enormous suffering in his country. He suggested a possible five-step solution: (1) A ceasefire on both sides (2) The withdrawal of Russian troops (3) An insertion of UN peacekeepers where necessary (4) The conducting of plebiscites in the Donbas and Crimea run by the UN with majority rule determining whether these territories are part of Ukraine or Russia (5) A NATO pledge of no eastern expansion, and a Russian pledge of no western expansion. Specter acknowledged potential problems with that plan but believed they could be addressed. He wrote: “As Churchill said, ‘Jaw-jaw is better than war-war.’ Ukraine has proven enough to Putin, and Putin has proven enough to Ukraine such that a negotiated resolution is the logical product of their respective toughness. Now they need to keep talking and get to yes.” ([Read the article](#))

Specter interviewed on “The Trouble with Tort Law”



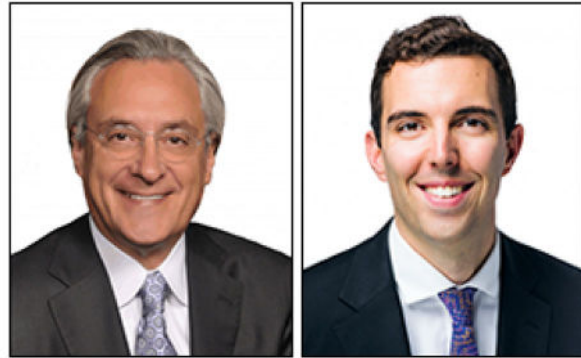
Specter

In a lengthy article with *Corporate Crime Reporter*, **Shalin Specter** bemoaned the practice of some plaintiffs firms of accumulating many mass torts – hundreds or even thousands – while not having the ability to discover or try those cases. The article in the legal print newsletter based in Washington, D.C., noted a letter written by Specter to the rules committee of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. In it, he stated: “Current practice permits a plaintiff’s attorney to amass more cases and clients than they can adequately represent in pursuit of the lawyer’s personal, financial gain. No rule of procedure or ethics directly prohibits such conduct.” This creates what Specter termed a “negative auction” in the litigation. Not only might a firm with many cases it can’t handle settle for less than a fair value, but that then puts pressure on other firms to follow suit, with many or most then capitulating and settling for the same amount as the “low negative auctioneer.” In making his point, Specter noted the transvaginal mesh litigation in which some cases were negotiated for between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per plaintiff. With, say, hundreds of clients, that may have benefited the lawyer, but not the clients. “Your duty to your client is to get the best result possible,” Specter said in the newsletter interview. “If you want to do that, you have to be willing to take every case that you accept to trial.” Defendants and insurance companies, he said, follow trial lawyers’ practices closely and won’t offer much money to

those they believe are not going to try cases. “You have to be known,” Specter added, “as a firm that will take cases to trial. You should not take a case unless you are willing to try it. You should never take a case with an eye toward settlement.” ([Read the complete article and Q&A.](#))

Kline, Bosworth investigate Temple student's death

Tom Kline and **Tom Bosworth** have been retained as counsel by the parents of slain Temple University student Samuel Collington to pursue an investigation and any potential claims relating to the death of their son. In an article in *The Legal Intelligencer* featuring Kline and Bosworth, Kline, noted for his success in numerous civil actions against universities and governments, pledged to conduct an exhaustive inquiry into the Nov. 28 shooting. “We intend to



Kline

Bosworth

leave no stone unturned as we search for the causes of this terrible tragedy which could and should have been avoided,” Kline said. The death of Collington, 21, on or near the Temple campus in North Philadelphia represents one of more than 500 homicides committed in the city last year. In the Collington case, a suspect was apprehended and charged with murder, robbery, and recklessly endangering another person. ([Read the article](#))

Newspaper marks 5 years after Tim Piazza hazing death



Tom Kline was quoted extensively in an article in Penn State's *Daily Collegian* about the five-year anniversary of the death of Timothy Piazza in a hazing incident at Beta Theta Pi, a tragedy that not only closed the frat house but resulted in changes to college regulations and state law. Kline and **David Williams** have worked alongside Evelyn and Jim Piazza, Timothy's parents, in their national endeavor to raise

awareness about the dangers of hazing. “It’s been five years since Tim died, and there has been no letting up on the pursuit of change,” Kline told reporter Samantha Verelli, “[They] have made this what undoubtedly will be a lifelong pursuit.” Kline has appeared with the Piazzas at a number of events and on television shows to push for change. One major goal was reached when Pennsylvania in 2018 enacted the Timothy Piazza Anti-Hazing Law, which, among other things, makes hazing a felony when it causes serious injury or death.

New Jersey and other states have since considered similar measures. Kline and Williams are currently representing the Piazzas in civil litigation over the tragedy, though he noted trial dates have been pushed back while appeals continue in criminal cases resulting from the incident. Trial is anticipated in 2023. “There are many steps left in the criminal and civil process, which will end up writing the more complete book on the subject of the measure of justice in which the Piazzas have obtained through both the criminal and civil justice system,” Kline said. ([Read the article](#))

Six new attorneys brings firm total to 54

Kline & Specter hired six additional attorneys recently, bringing the firm’s total to 54 and solidifying its place as the largest plaintiffs firm in Pennsylvania and one of the largest in the nation. The six include one attorney who is also a registered nurse and military veteran, two former criminal prosecutors, one with a record of case recoveries totaling more than \$60 million, another who handled complex products liability and toxic tort litigation at another firm, and yet another who holds a master’s degree in social work and was instrumental in the highly publicized disclosure of systemic child abuse at a juvenile detention center.

Terrance DeAngelo is not only a lawyer but also an experienced registered nurse and a decorated U.S. Air Force veteran. DeAngelo is a native Philadelphian. After earning his nursing degree at LaSalle University, he enrolled in Air Force Officer Training School and rose to the rank of captain in the Air Force Nurse Corps while working clinically in Washington, D.C. He later volunteered to deploy in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, attached to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force where he worked as a nurse/medic alongside the Navy SEALs. While stateside, he cared for injured troops and later managed a team of nurses and technicians that handled more than 1,500 surgical cases annually. DeAngelo earned the Army Commendation Medal in 2013 and the Air Force Commendation Medal in 2014 along with the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Star and the Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon with Gold Border. After his military service, he attended the James E. Beasley School of Law at Temple University and later worked as an attorney at Barrett DeAngelo, LLC. At LaSalle, DeAngelo was a member of the rowing team and the wrestling club. During this time, he was also a researcher for the U.S. Army Research Institute for Chemical Defense, where he conducted research to develop antidotes to chemical warfare agents.



DeAngelo

Sherrell L. Dandy has spent most of her career fighting for victims as a state and federal prosecutor. The Philadelphia native began her legal profession with the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office where she worked in several positions, including in her last post as assistant supervisor of more than 30 attorneys in the Homicide and Non-Fatal Shooting Unit. Along with approving homicide-related search warrants and charges, she also investigated and tried some 50



Dandy

major felony and homicide jury trials during her eight years with the office. Dandy also worked as a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Roanoke, Va. In addition to her time as a prosecutor, Dandy worked with the professional liability defense group at a private law firm. She earned her bachelor's degree from Ursinus College and her law degree from the Thomas R. Kline School of Law, where she was a member of the Inaugural National Trial Team and was the first student to be both a member of the National Trial Team and National Moot Court Board. She won several awards for excellence in trial and appellate advocacy, including the Best Trial Advocacy Student Performance Award, the Best Oralist Award at the John J. Gibbons National Moot Court Competition, Moot Court Best Oral Advocate Award, the Pro-Bono Service Award and the Kline & Specter Trial Advocacy Award. Dandy is an adjunct professor at Kline Law, teaching Introduction to Trial Advocacy. She is an elected executive board member of the Barristers' Association of Philadelphia and serves as a leader of a community development ministry at Epiphany Fellowship Church.

Helen A. Lawless ranked No. 1 in two majors at University College Dublin, won a Best Oralist award in the Supreme Court Moot Court Competition while at Stanford Law School, and was named champion and best speaker in debate competitions across both Europe and the United States. Immediately prior to joining Kline & Specter, Lawless was an Assistant District Attorney in the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, most recently working in the Major Trials Unit, where she handled all phases of cases, from discovery to plea negotiations to litigating felony criminal trials. She interned at plaintiffs and defense law firms in Alexandria, Va., and in New York City, respectively, and also at the Campaign Legal Center in Washington, D.C.

At Stanford, Lawless was senior editor for the *Stanford Law Review*, a board member and chosen participant on the moot court team, and champion with the debate team. She was named Best Speaker at the National U.S. Debating Championships America's Cup. As an undergraduate at University College Dublin, Lawless compiled a 3.86 GPA, and finished first in both her majors, politics and economics. She competed in international debate competitions and was named a Top 20 speaker at the European Debate Championships. Lawless was the Trinity Champion, Cambridge Open Champion, and a finalist in both the Oxford Open and the Glasgow Open. She won the Gold Presidential Medal for being the best speaker in her debate society. Lawless was twice elected to student government.



Lawless

Frank Mangiaracina is a proven trial lawyer who helped compile more than \$60 million in recoveries in five years before coming to Kline & Specter. In 2021, he was co-lead counsel in a trial that resulted in a \$2.1 million verdict against Domino's Pizza for a client who suffered severe and permanent injuries to his leg when his motorcycle was struck by a delivery vehicle. Mangiaracina was co-counsel in litigation that achieved a \$44 million pre-trial settlement in a product liability case for an oil rig worker who was left a quadriplegic after he was struck by a falling light fixture. He also helped win three seven-figure medical malpractice settlements -- \$5.5 million, \$5 million and \$3.5 million for, respectively, failures to timely diagnose stroke, diagnose



Mangiaracina

and treat sepsis and to treat an aortic aneurysm -- with his former firm, Sheridan & Murray LLC in Fort Washington, Pa. Before that he worked as an attorney at Berger Montague in Philadelphia. Mangiaracina has been selected as a Pennsylvania Rising Star by Super Lawyers, placing him among the top 2.5 percent of attorneys in the state who are 40 or younger. Mangiaracina earned his law degree at the Temple University Beasley School of Law, where he graduated *magna cum laude*, in the top 5 percent of his class and was a member of the Order of the Coif honor society. He was staff editor for *Temple Law Review* and a member of Temple's renowned National Trial Team, which placed in the semifinals of the National Institute of Trial Advocacy's "Tournament of Champions." Mangiaracina earned his undergraduate degree from Lehigh University.

Timothy A. Burke has wide-ranging experience – from personal injury to criminal defense, and corporate securities fraud to class actions. His focus at the firm is mass torts and catastrophic personal injury. Burke came to Kline & Specter from another Center City law firm where he handled complex products liability and toxic tort litigation, including serving as co-counsel on numerous benzene toxic tort trials. Before that, Burke worked as a public defender for the Ninth Circuit Public Defender's Office in Charleston, S.C., where he represented clients charged with crimes ranging from minor offenses to serious felonies. He managed a caseload of nearly 100 clients. Burke began his career with a private Charleston law firm representing shareholder clients in its Corporate Securities Fraud division. Burke was named a 2020 and 2021 Rising Star by Super Lawyers, the independent survey group that selects the top 2.5 percent of attorneys in Pennsylvania younger than 40. He also was chosen by the National Trial Lawyers for inclusion in its "Top 40 Under 40" in Pennsylvania for plaintiffs' civil litigation. Burke earned his undergraduate degree from Texas A&M University and his law degree from the Charles Widger School of Law at Villanova University. During law school, he worked as a judicial extern and law clerk for Philadelphia Common Pleas Judge Mark Bernstein. A Texas native and an Eagle Scout, Burke is licensed to practice in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and South Carolina.



Burke



Orians

Nathan Orians, who also holds a master's degree in social work, decided to become a lawyer after witnessing abuses while an employee at a juvenile detention facility. He later became a whistleblower in the case that drew the attention of the public defender, state legislators and the Pennsylvania attorney general's office. "The systemic abuses I witnessed and repeatedly attempted to stop forced me to reconsider my entire career path and go to law school," Orians told Fox News at the time. In its report, Fox cited the "shocking revelations" and noted a judge had ordered the closure of the facility in Delaware County, Pa. At Kline & Specter, where he previously worked as a law clerk, Orians concentrates his practice in child sexual and physical abuse cases while also handling catastrophic personal

injury litigation. In his tenure as a social worker, Orians held a number of positions, including as a clinical case manager at the juvenile detention center, conducting therapy sessions at Bard College, and writing grants for programs helping at-risk youths stay in school. Orians earned his bachelor's degree at Vassar College and his master's degree at Smith College School for Social Work. He earned his law degree at the Thomas R. Kline School of Law, where he graduated *cum laude*, was a *Law Review* editor and board member, and won several academic awards and Pro Bono Honors, partly for his work helping expose abuse at the juvenile detention center.

Tom and Parker sang us into 2022

Tom Kline ended 2021 with his third musical album, this one recorded with granddaughter **Parker Merson**, daughter of **Jordan Merson**, and titled "Lollipop and Other Treats." The album, which includes pop songs from the 1950s and 1960s, has **Jerry Bernhardt III** producing and providing musicals, Drexel University professor **Cyrille Taillandier** as engineer, and features guest vocals by **Lexa Koel**. Songs include favorites such as "Lollipop," "Under the Boardwalk," "Let's Twist Again," "Yakety Yak," and, of course, "South Street." Said Kline in an email to friends and fans: "It was a joy for us to make and we hope it will bring you a little fun as we move forward to 2022 and brighter days ahead." The musical album was the third recorded by Kline the crooner, following "My ABC's," a collection of kids songs, and "We Can Build a Snowman." To listen to the album click [HERE](#) or [request a copy of the CD](#). To view all three albums, visit www.TomKlinemusic.com



From the Photo Gallery:



Tom Kline welcomes former 76ers backup center **Dwight Howard** "back home" to Philly at a recent game. The Sixers won in a cakewalk, 105-87.

CHARITY:

Firm employees take the season to heart with volunteer work

Kline & Specter employees came out in numbers for various charity events over the holidays and on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Packaging breakfast wraps and sandwiches and preparing fruit salad at the Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance, known as MANNA, in North Philadelphia were **Angela Fattizzo**, **Avery Maudlin**, **Tracy Leonardis**, **Jodi DeStefon**, **Eric Bowen**, **Kim Kelly**, **Carolyn Hopkins** and **Dr. Rick Gorman**.



Above, Jodi DeStefon and Carolyn Hopkins prepare some meals. **Kim Comey** and **Micaela Saperstein** worked at the Cradles to Crayons clothing drive, while **Courtney Wilson**, **Susan Grady**, **Chloe DeOnna**, **Carolyn Hopkins**, **Alexander Esposito** and **Thomas Bland** volunteered for programs at Eastern State Penitentiary. Kim Kelly also volunteered at The Table Food Pantry in Philadelphia, **Michelle Zasada** made blankets for the homeless, and **Lisa Lewandowski** gave her time at the National Constitution Center. **Michael Leo Haddad** volunteered at the Arab Studies Institute, **Tee Cooper** worked at the African American Museum, and **Ryan Lim** traveled to Austin, Tex., where he volunteered at the MLK Community Festival. **Sharon Timko** assembled breakfast bags for the homeless at Trinity Church /Caring for Friends – Shop, while Jodi DeStefon helped clean up Kelly Park and served a meal at an assisted living facility in Media.



David Inscho and his wife, **Tammi**, hosted a Three-on-Three Youth Basketball Tournament at the Phield House in Philadelphia, with 11 teams participating and proceeds going to Give and Go Athletics. **Nadeem Bezar** and **Priscilla Jimenez** also sponsored teams in the tournament. The charity provides therapeutic and athletic programs designed to meet the emotional and physical needs of youth in Philadelphia.

“Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.”

– **Booker T. Washington**

"One of the country's leading personal injury firms"
Philadelphia Inquirer

"The most powerful plaintiffs firm in the city"
Philadelphia Business Journal

"A powerhouse law firm"
The New York Times



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