

THE CITIZENS' VOICE

By Michael R. Sisak (Staff Writer)

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Hazleton native becomes advocate for Sandusky accusers

BELLEFONTE - He represents just one of the accusers, but attorney [Tom Kline](#) has emerged as a powerful advocate for all eight men who say former Penn State defense coordinator Jerry Sandusky sexually abused them as children.

The Hazleton native has been an ubiquitous presence at Sandusky's child sex abuse trial, attending each court session, schmoozing with reporters in a makeshift newsroom at the nearby Dairy Queen and dissecting the case at near-daily press briefings while the prosecutors and defense attorneys remain under a gag order.

Often, he speaks in blistering one-liners targeting Sandusky's alleged conduct ("It's just remarkable how many children one man can shower with," he quipped last week) and the defense's parading character witnesses in to vouch for the former Penn State defensive coordinator's reputation and explain his habit of showering with children ("There was this attempt to, as I put it, shower the jury with testimony," he said).

Kline, one-half of the masthead at the power Philadelphia personal injury team Kline & Specter, disclosed to reporters last week that he and Victim 5 are investigating a potential civil lawsuit against Sandusky, his Second Mile charity and Penn State, where e-mails and other documents showed senior officials were aware of abuse allegations against Sandusky since the 1990s.

Kline grew up on West Diamond Avenue and graduated from Hazleton Area High School in 1965, where he was the vice president of the senior class. While in high school, he said, he bagged groceries at the old Genetti's Supermarket on 15th Street and worked summers in the stock exchange on Laurel Street across from the side entrance to the Leader Store.

He attended Lehigh University, where he earned a master's degree in American History and completed his Ph.D. course work. He returned home and taught the sixth grade in Freeland from 1969 to 1975 before attending the Duquesne University School of Law in Pittsburgh.

"I'm very proud of having grown up in Hazleton and my roots there and my family there," Kline said.

"I have long and deep roots in Hazleton and a lot of affection for the town and the region, which has fallen on hard times."

Kline's grandfather owned a store on Wyoming Street called Abe Kline - The Big Boot. His father, who managed a Rival Dress Co. factory in McAdoo, died in 1981. His mother died in 1995. Kline still returns to Hazleton to visit their gravesites.

"I have bona fides in that area, no doubt," Kline said.

Kline's client, Victim 5, testified last week that Sandusky took advantage of him after they worked out for the first and last time at the Penn State football facility in August 2001. After some pull ups and a run on the treadmill, Sandusky suggested they go into the sauna. There, Victim 5 said, Sandusky removed his towel and exposed his penis.

Later, in the shower, Sandusky forced him to touch it, the now 23-year-old Victim 5 said. The incident happened six months after former Penn State assistant coach Mike McQueary told head coach Joe Paterno and university officials that he saw Sandusky assaulting a preteen boy in a team shower.

"My client looks at this situation as both Mr. Sandusky having preyed upon him and Penn State having failed him," Kline said. "There's no doubt in our mind that Penn State grossly mishandled this situation."