

2018 Year in Review: *Exceptional Attorneys Hired, Remarkable Growth of a Cornerstone Practice Area, and Anniversaries Celebrated*

As a new year is upon us, we reflect back on 2018 and the prosperous year we had at CMDA. We have continued to expand the Firm, develop our insurance defense practice area, and celebrate some remarkable anniversaries.

Attorney Hires

The following attorneys joined our Firm in 2018: Jacklyn Paletta, Stanley Okoli, Braeden Willoughby, Shane Nolan, Lina Kaskorkis, Katie Stearns, and Bradley Yanalunas.

Jacklyn Paletta is a partner in our Livonia office where she focuses her practice on insurance defense matters, including directors and officers, errors and omissions, and legal malpractice. She concentrates on defending Michigan No-Fault, Personal Injury Protection (PIP), and Bodily Injury (BI) claims for multiple auto accident carriers.

She is well-versed in the often arbitrary pricing schemes medical providers implement for insureds involved in auto accidents for the auto insurance companies. Because of this knowledge, Ms. Paletta has proved to be extremely successful in motion practice as well as trial. She has tried cases to verdict in both district and circuit courts in Michigan.

Ms. Paletta may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or jpaletta@cmda-law.com.

Stanley Okoli is an attorney in our Livonia office where he focuses his practice on research and writing, as well as plaintiff's personal injury, insurance defense matters, and litigation. He writes briefs for submission to all levels of state and federal courts, argues cases in both the state and federal courts of appeals, and performs research for all areas of law handled by our Firm.

Mr. Okoli has taken over 30 cases to Michigan Court of Appeals and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and has handled 14 jury trials. Mr. Okoli is a strong advocate for his clients and vigorously fights to obtain favorable lawsuit settlements and verdicts.

Mr. Okoli may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or jashton@cmda-law.com.

Braeden Willoughby is an attorney in our Livonia office where he focuses his practice on insurance defense matters, including Michigan No-Fault coverage disputes and negligence actions involving fraudulent, moderate and catastrophic injuries and damages.

Prior to joining CMDA, he handled first- and third-party no-fault defense litigation cases for several insurance companies, rental car companies, and self-insured clients. Throughout law school, Mr. Willoughby clerked for an Oakland County Circuit Court Judge, where his exposure to the court system reinforced his passion for the law. It is his knowledge of the law, and the passion to fulfill the needs of his clients, that supports his ability to achieve quality outcomes.

Mr. Willoughby may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or bwilloughby@cmda-law.com.

Shane Nolan is an attorney in our Livonia office where he focuses his practice on the defense of liability lawsuits. He works with insurance companies, self-insured corporations, businesses and municipal entities in a wide variety of civil litigation, as well as Michigan No-Fault claims (PIP, automobile negligence, and uninsured/underinsured motorist), and premises liability, general liability and insurance coverage disputes.

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An experienced litigator at both the trial court and appellate levels, Mr. Nolan has successfully argued dispositive motions, tried multiple cases to verdict and regularly represents clients in various alternative dispute forums, including case evaluation, facilitation and arbitration.

Mr. Nolan may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or snolan@cmda-law.com.

Lina Kaskorkis is an attorney in our Livonia office where she focuses her practice on insurance defense matters, including premises liability, Personal Injury Protection (PIP), and Michigan No-Fault claims for multiple auto accident carriers. She has worked as an insurance defense attorney since graduating law school and has experience handling a wide range of civil litigation matters.

Ms. Kaskorkis may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or lkaskorkis@cmda-law.com.

Bradley Yanalunas is an attorney in our Grand Rapids office where he focuses his practice on municipal law, insurance defense, and construction law. He has experience with insurance matters, including arson and fraudulent claims investigation and defense, and subrogation cases. He also handles municipal issues for governmental entities throughout Michigan.

Mr. Yanalunas may be reached at (616) 975-7470 or byanalunas@cmda-law.com.

Kathleen (Katie) Stearns is an attorney in our Livonia office where she focuses her practice on commercial litigation, collection, and general litigation matters. She also has experience in both commercial and consumer bankruptcy, receiverships, and insolvency matters.

While in law school, she was active in Mock Trial, competing in numerous national competitions. She has interned in the Michigan Supreme Court with the Hon. Mary Beth Kelly, as well as with Federal District Judges Bernard Friedman and Gerald Rosen.

Ms. Stearns may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or kstearns@cmda-law.com.

These attorneys are all exceptional assets to the Firm, and I am sure you will hear much more about them in future newsletters.

Practice Area Growth

Our insurance defense practice area grew significantly this year with the addition of Jacklyn Paletta, Stanley Okoli, Braeden Willoughby, Shane Nolan, Lina Kaskorkis, and Brad Yanalunas.

CMDA is committed to providing comprehensive and aggressive counsel to insurance policyholders and insurance carriers. Protecting the interests of clients in matters covered by insurance and providing insurance companies with sound advice regarding insurance coverage issues has been the cornerstone of our Firm since our inception in 1965.

Employee Anniversaries

Several employees celebrated impressive anniversaries with the Firm in 2018. **Julie Callahan**, a paralegal in our Livonia office, celebrated her 30th anniversary; **Jeff Clark**, a partner in our Livonia office, and **Greg Roberts**, an attorney in our Livonia office, celebrated their 25th anniversary; **Laura Helfer**, a legal assistant in our Livonia office, celebrated her 15th anniversary; and **Greg Grant**, an attorney in our Traverse City office, celebrated his 10th anniversary. We are fortunate to have such a great group of people working at the Firm and thank them all for their dedication.

The continuous and steady growth at CMDA are testaments to the hard work our attorneys and support staff put into our Firm and the superb level of service we strive to offer clients. This progress and longevity only occurs because of the exceptional clients we are blessed to serve. Have a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2019.

Christopher G. Schultz, Managing Partner

Congratulations to CMDA Attorney Curt Benson, Newly Elected Kent County Circuit Court Judge



Curt Benson

Congratulations to Curt Benson who was recently elected a Kent County Circuit Court Judge. He was sworn into service on January 1, 2019.

Chris Schultz, managing partner of the Firm, explains, "We are very proud of Curt for being se-

lected to serve as a Circuit Court Judge and know all the qualities that made him a great attorney at CMDA will make him an equally exceptional judge. We trust he will provide justice and fairness in the cases that enter his courtroom and everyone at CMDA supports his strong commitment to serving justice. Our loss is society's greater gain."

Attorney Elected Partner



Joel B. Ashton

made in our community and are looking forward to his continued leadership.”

Joel Ashton joined our Firm in 2017. He focuses his practice on insurance defense, including Michigan No-Fault claims (PIP, automobile negligence, uninsured/underinsured motorist), as well as premises liability and general negligence. His practice also includes the defense of contract and liability claims, con-

We are pleased to announce that Joel Ashton has been elected a Partner at CMDA. Chris Schultz, managing partner of the Firm, explains, “Joel has demonstrated his ability to lead, manage, and develop the Firm through his professional skills, client relationships, and work efforts. We recognize the work he has done for our clients and the contributions he has

tract interpretation issues, subrogation claims involving automobile, fire and casualty, commercial and related coverage. Mr. Ashton maintains an AV Preeminent Rating from Martindale-Hubbell, which is the highest possible rating an attorney can achieve for both ethical standards and legal ability.

He is an experienced litigator who has tried over 50 civil jury trials in Circuit and District Courts throughout Michigan and has participated in countless arbitrations, facilitations, and case evaluations. He is skilled at breaking down complex matters into understandable terms, which allows clients the ability to evaluate options and develop effective strategies.

Mr. Ashton works in our Livonia office and may be reached at (734) 261-2400 or jashton@cmda-law.com.

Please join us in welcoming him to the partnership and congratulate him for a job well done.

Attorneys Selected as Michigan Super Lawyers & Rising Stars

We are proud to announce that several CMDA attorneys have been selected for inclusion in the 2018 Michigan Super Lawyers & Rising Stars List. Chris Schultz, managing partner of the Firm, explains, “Having several attorneys at CMDA named as Super Lawyers and Rising Stars is a great honor that mirrors the high standards of excellence our attorneys set for themselves. It is also a testament to the hard work, dedication and success they strive to provide clients. Having three attorneys named as Rising Stars is a positive reflection of the Firm’s future direction and leadership.”

2018 MICHIGAN SUPER LAWYERS*

- James R. Acho:** Top Rated Civil Litigation Attorney
- Jeffrey R. Clark:** Top Rated State, Local and Municipal Attorney
- Haider A. Kazim:** Top Rated State, Local and Municipal Attorney
- Allan C. Vander Laan:** Top Rated State, Local and Municipal Attorney

*The Super Lawyers list recognizes no more than 5% of attorneys in Michigan.



Jeffrey Clark



James Acho



Haider Kazim



Allan Vander Laan

2018 MICHIGAN RISING STARS*

- Matthew W. Cross:** Top Rated Civil Litigation Attorney
- Jennifer A. Richards:** Top Rated Civil Litigation Attorney
- Braeden R. Willoughby:** Top Rated Personal Injury Attorney

*The Rising Stars list recognizes no more than 2.5% of attorneys in Michigan.



Jennifer Richards



Matthew Cross



Braeden Willoughby

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Our Vision

To meld our legal expertise, professional support staff,
 technical resources and variety of locations to deliver
 first rate legal services at a fair value to a full range
 of business, municipal, insurance and individual clients.