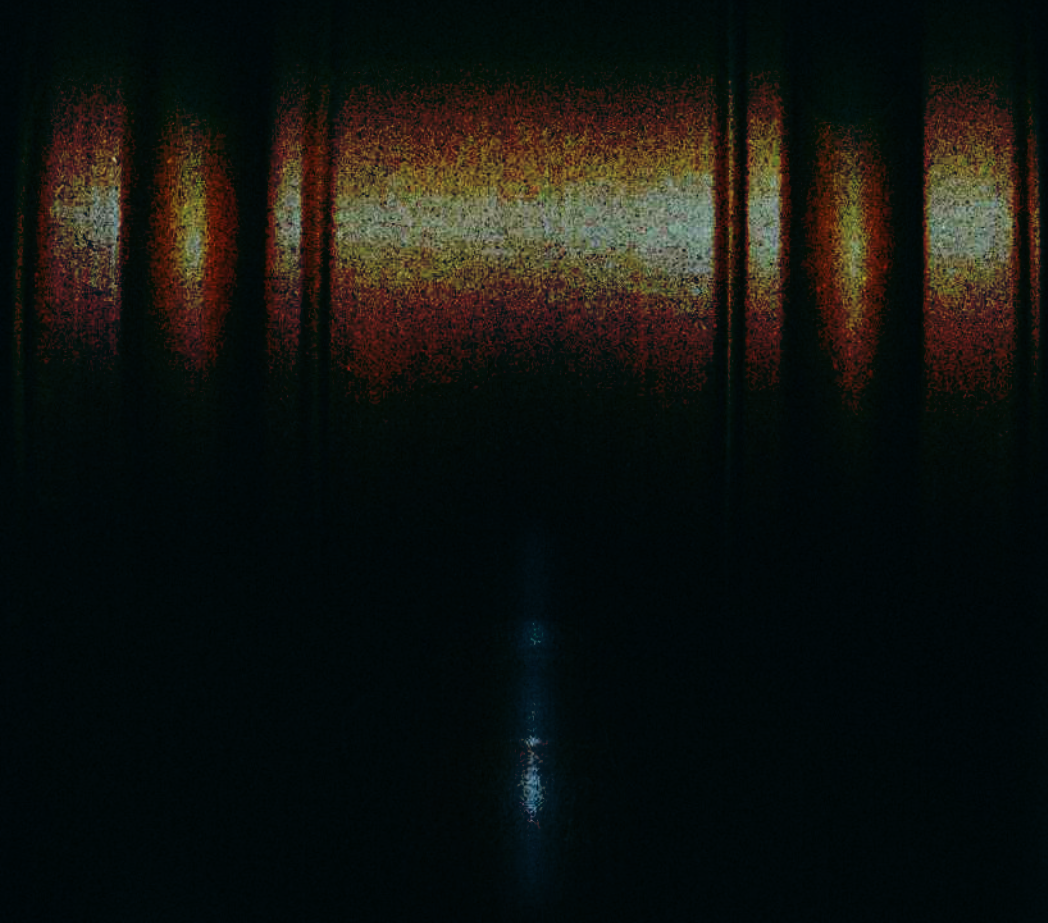
WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER



SPANGENBERG SHIBLEY & LIBER

TRIAL LAWYERS



SPANGENBERG ANNOUNCES

Uzma Ahmed

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Uzma Ahmed grew up half-a-world away in a small town with a desert climate in Pakistan. But she now considers both Cleveland - and the Spangenberg law firm - to be home.

"My friends laugh when I say I love the snow, but I do," she says. "And I love working here just as much." The firm feels the same way, having recently promoted Uzma to Chief Operating Officer. "A good law firm runs smoothly on two tracks: the legal track and the business track," says Spangenberg Managing Partner Stuart Scott. "Uzma's management expertise allows us as lawyers to spend more time on our cases."

Uzma, who holds a master's degree in accounting, wants to help enable the attorneys to do what they do best. "These lawyers are amazing, ethical professionals working to help regular people who've been hurt or wronged obtain justice," she says. "It's an honor to support their efforts."

As COO, Uzma manages all the day-to-day business of the firm, including HR, accounting, and operations. "We want the attorneys freed up to focus on their clients," she says, adding "that's both good for the firm and good for our clients."

Spangenberg has a culture where people pitch in, and Uzma says they're now building off that tradition. "Our firm is a place where everyone, no matter their role, doesn't wait to be asked to help, they look for chances to do so." Uzma speaks four languages, but her favorite may be a fifth: teamwork. "It's a language all its own, and we cultivate it."

Giving back matters to Uzma. She is treasurer of Proyecto Raices, which supports Latino/Hispanic children in and around Akron. For fun, she and her husband, Anthony Preston, take long walks by waterfalls. Together, they share a blended family of seven children.

Uzma is analytical, but also, decisive. Both at work, and in life. In fact, she and Anthony married just two months after they met. "When you know," she says with a smile, "you know." And Uzma knows she has found a home with Anthony, in Cleveland, and at Spangenberg.

Welcome

HEATHER!



We are pleased to announce that Heather L. Thomas Esq., MSN, CRNA has joined Spangenberg Shibley & Liber as an associate trial lawyer. Her practice focuses on birth injury, medical malpractice, and nursing home abuse cases. Heather started her career as a Registered Nurse specializing in critical care and level 1 trauma for several years before attending Case Western Reserve's MSN Anesthesia program. Heather worked as a Certified Nurse Anesthetist for almost 20 years, most of which was spent with the Cleveland Clinic. Heather provided medical care in nearly 1,000 births and over 10,000 surgical procedures. Her experience as a medical provider convinced her she wanted to advocate for patients in the courtroom, and after consulting as an expert witness in a 5-week birth injury trial, Heather decided to go to law school and become a trial lawyer. In 2020, Heather received her law degree from Cleveland State University College of Law. While at CSU, Heather served as President of the Health Law Society and obtained certifications in health law policy and healthcare compliance. For the past three years, Heather has been building a birth injury division at the national law firm of Morgan & Morgan. Heather is also the wife of an Army Lt. Col. and the mother of 3 daughters, including a 23-year-old daughter in the Army National Guard.

We are excited to welcome Heather to the firm!



Dennis Lansdowne

RECEIVES THE OAJ'S CRAIG SPANGENBERG LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Growing up one of seven children in a South Euclid family, Dennis Lansdowne never dreamed of becoming a lawyer. But once he chose that path, he pursued it with a passion.

And now, forty years after he began in private practice, Dennis has been honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Ohio Association for Justice. "It was unexpected," Dennis says, "and it was humbling. I have great respect for the OAJ and the way its members pursue justice for their clients."

After graduating—first in his class—from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Lansdowne clerked for the Honorable Robert B. Krupansky at both the district court level, and at the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. "I saw, up close, the practice of law at a very high level," he remembers, "and I wanted to get into the courtroom and I wanted to work at that level."

His clerkship led to an associate's position at a large law firm, Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue. Two years later, in 1985, after meeting with Craig Spangenberg, he left to join the firm where he remains a partner to this day.

"Craig was the consummate trial lawyer," Dennis says. "Always prepared, with a tremendous courtroom presence, and a mastery of the art of persuasion. And he had great empathy for his clients."

Dennis Lansdowne has certainly followed in his mentor's footsteps. In just the past two years, he has earned three multi-million dollar verdicts for his clients: one for $6.5 million, a second for $5.85 million, and a third for $2 million.

He gives a lot of credit for his successes to his partners and the culture they have developed over decades. "Having partners who support and believe in cases as strongly as all of us do," Dennis says, "is actually essential to what we do."

"We work hard," he adds, "and we are dedicated to the craft. We also care about each other." That last point may not be unique to the Spangenberg firm, but it is certainly special. "We are there for each other as people, not just as lawyers," Dennis says, adding with a smile, "and we laugh a lot—sometimes with, and sometimes at, each other."

He also points to his family, starting with his wife of 42 years, Kim, and their four children, as critical to his success. "You do sacrifice some time with your family to pursue these cases with the vigor they demand," he says. "I've been so blessed that Kim and our children were all invested in this work. They believed in the clients we tried to help, and they believed in their cases. I'm very grateful. I couldn't have done it without them."



Nick DiCello

NAMED VICE-PRESIDENT OF CMBA

It is a legacy of service at the Spangenberg law firm that spans the generations. A legacy that is important not only to the firm, but also, to its clients.

Attorney Nick DiCello has been named Vice-President of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association. And, in two years, Nick will become President of the CMBA when he succeeds Attorney Matthew Besser.

In doing so, DiCello will be the sixth Spangenberg attorney to lead a bar association in Cleveland since the firm was founded more than seventy-five years ago. "A bar association is the professional organization that represents the legal community," DiCello says, "so it is important for our firm and our clients to have a seat at that table."

He adds that many of the leaders of a bar association are usually attorneys who represent corporate clients. "We need trial lawyers who represent ordinary people—often people who've been injured—to have a voice inside the bar association," Nick says, "and that is part of the reason our firm has such a legacy of service. We represent those people, and we are in the leadership."

A bar association often speaks for the legal community regarding pending legislation. In such instances, DiCello believes it's critical that trial lawyers—and, by extension, their clients—are involved in that process. "I know I'm following in the footsteps of some great attorneys at our firm," DiCello says, adding, "I'm proud to do that, and also, humbled by it."

The CMBA upholds disciplinary standards for attorneys and serves as the public voice of the legal profession to the media and to the community at large. DiCello adds he's proud of the CMBA's many philanthropic endeavors. Those include awarding several scholarships, one of which is named in honor of the late Cleveland Congressman Louis Stokes.

"Our goal at the CMBA is to serve both the legal community, and the broader community as well," DiCello says.

"I look forward to doing both."

CMBA PRESENTS

Pete Weinberger

WITH LIVING LEGACY AWARD



Spangenberg Shibley & Liber is proud to announce that Pete Weinberger has been awarded the Living Legacy Award from the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (CMBA). “The committee worked diligently to select honorees who are remarkable attorneys, leaders, and community advocates. Each honoree has made an indelible mark on our Bar Association, the legal profession and the Greater Cleveland community,” said Larry W. Zukerman, 2022-23 Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Foundation President.

Pete was presented with the Living Legacy Award at the CMBA’s 150th Anniversary party, called “Rock the Bar,” held at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Pete is a past president of the CMBA (known as the Cuyahoga County Bar Association at the time). He has also served in many other leadership roles in professional and charitable organizations in the Cleveland area, including President of the Cleveland Academy of Trial Attorneys, President of the First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, President of Chagrin Valley Country Club, and Chairman of the leadership council of the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Pete also currently serves as Plaintiff’s co-liaison counsel in the National Prescription Opiate Multidistrict Litigation case (MDL No. 2804, which is centralized in the Northern District of Ohio). The litigation is being brought on behalf of cities and counties against the manufacturers, distributors, and dispensers of opiate medications such as OxyContin and Fentanyl. Pete has helped secure over $50 billion in settlements for communities across Ohio and the country that have been burdened with the enormous public costs associated with the opioid epidemic. Most recently Pete obtained a $650 million verdict on behalf of Lake County, Ohio and Trumbull County, Ohio in a trial against CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart.

Pete and his wife, Laurie, have been married for more than 50 years and have two children, Kelly and Adam, and four grandchildren.

Spangenberg Shibley & Liber was a Pacesetter Sponsor of the CMBA Rock the Bar event.

2022-2023 SPANGENBERG SHIBLEY & LIBER VERDICTS

$6.5 Million	›	Med Mal-Wrongful Death, April 2022
$5.8 Million	›	Auto Crash-Wrongful Death, May 2022
$650 Million	›	Opioid MDL, August 2022
$17 Million	›	Road Construction-Wrongful Death, October 2022
$6 Million	›	Med Mal-Wrongful Death, February 2023
$7 Million	›	Med Mal-Wrongful Death, October 2023

BEST LAWYERS® "LAWYER OF THE YEAR" AWARD WINNERS

Stuart E. Scott
Class Actions, 2024

Jeremy A. Tor
Civil Rights, 2024

Dustin B. Herman
Product Liability, 2024

Nicholas A. DiCello
Civil Rights, 2019; Personal Injury, 2023

Dennis R. Lansdowne
Medical Malpractice, 2018; Personal Injury, 2020

Bill Hawal
Medical Malpractice, 2020

Pete H. Weinberger
Medical Malpractice, 2017