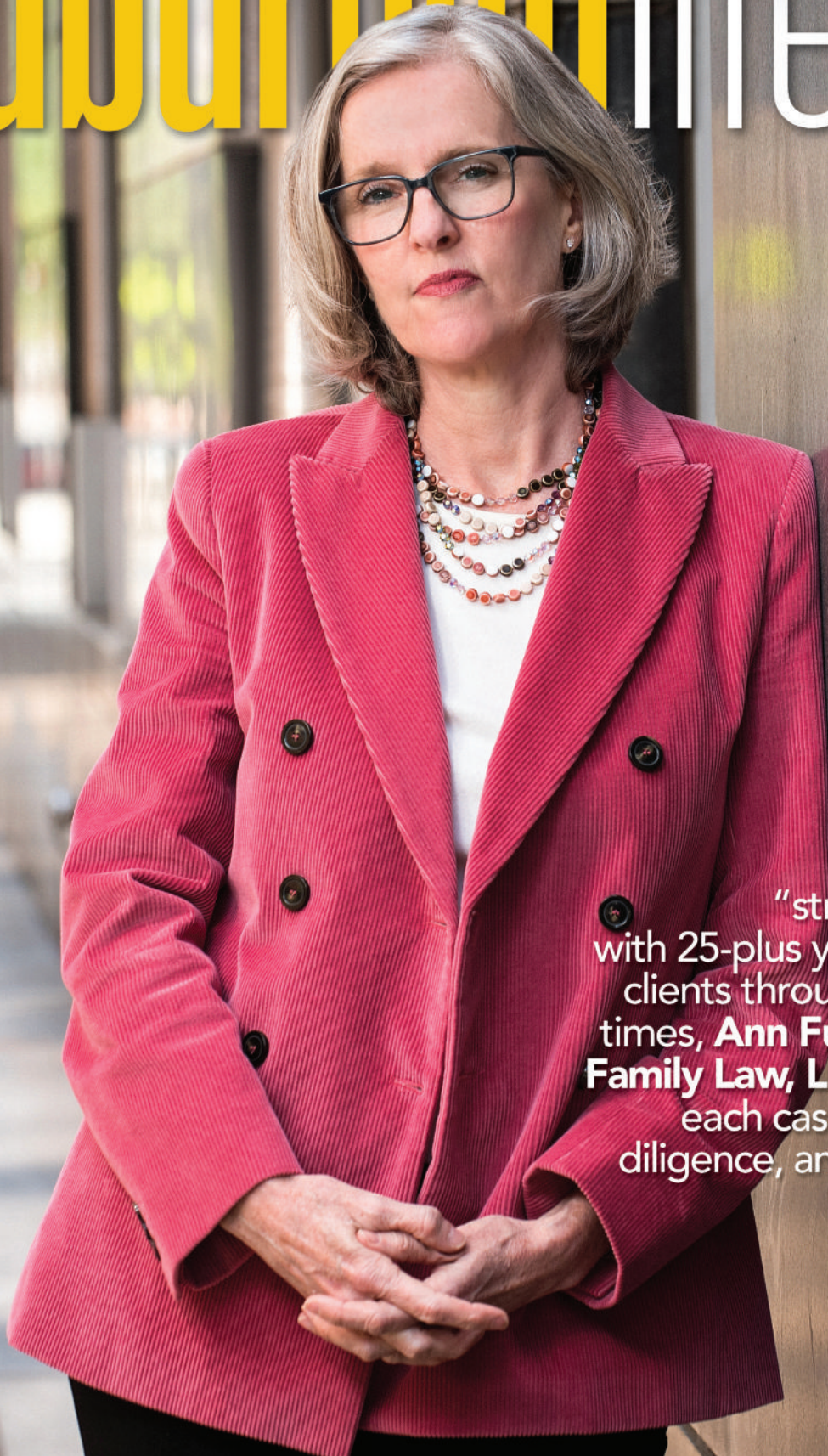


suburban life



+ Also
Inside:
Outdoor living,
best banks,
and more

Known as a
"straight shooter"
with 25-plus years of helping
clients through challenging
times, **Ann Funge of Funge
Family Law, LLC** approaches
each case with honesty,
diligence, and pragmatism.
page 48


 A portrait of Ann Funge, a woman with short, wavy blonde hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses, a red corduroy blazer, and a multi-strand necklace of colorful beads. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile.

Seeing the 'BIG PICTURE'

Known as a “straight shooter” with 25-plus years of helping clients through challenging times, **Ann Funge of Funge Family Law, LLC** approaches each case with honesty, diligence, and pragmatism.

by **LEIGH STUART** photography by **JEFF ANDERSON**

Attorney Ann Funge has always practiced family law. She started in 1992, during her second summer of law school, when she worked for a well-respected family law practitioner in Pittsburgh. Ever since, she has enjoyed the broad range of legal knowledge, hardnosed strategizing, high energy, and empathy required for the job.

“You get to be a generalist, while being a specialist,” says Funge. “You have to know about taxes, corporations, Social Security, inheritances, trusts, etc., but all within the family law context. And, of course, some kitchen-table psychology.”

Funge was a family court “regular” in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area and has become one in Philadelphia’s five-county area since moving east in 2006. She’s dealt with everything from high-net-worth divorces and custody disputes to pro bono casework.

“Everyone deserves access to the legal system,” Funge says. “Some people think

it’s a luxury to have a skilled attorney work for a client, but the courts make the process difficult, so I’d say it’s a necessity. I represent all kinds of people involved in all kinds of marriages, with no bias or agenda other than wanting to help people get through a very humbling and usually very difficult phase of their lives.”

Funge, who is admitted to practice in both Pennsylvania and her home state of New Jersey, holds a Bachelor of Science in Commerce from the University of Virginia and a Juris Doctor from the University of Pittsburgh. She has long been active with

the family law sections of her local and state bar associations, as well as a leader within local matrimonial chapters of the Inns of Court, a national organization of lawyers, judges, and law professors dedicated to maintaining civility and professionalism in the practice of law. In fact, she was the 2018 Chair of the Philadelphia Bar Association Family Law Section, and remains an active member of its Executive Committee.

Involvement in such professional organizations helps inform Funge’s approach to protecting her clients’ best interests, both in and out of the courtroom.

“Getting to know opposing lawyers and judges outside of a case is invaluable to resolving a case,” says Funge. She also credits the lessons learned from her prior employers, all leaders within Pennsylvania’s family law world. “I’ve learned something important from each of them.”

All these experiences helped her cultivate her talent for seeing the “big picture.”

"A lot of lawyers can get caught up in winning small issues, and sometimes winning a small issue is to the detriment of the larger picture," Funge shares. "Shoot for winning the war, not the battle; see the forest for the trees. Some lawyers, because of their competitive nature, will push something even though a client doesn't think it's an issue."

She reminds clients that they will remain part of a family after their divorce or custody case is over and that short-term wins may create negative long-term consequences.

"I think I'm good at pointing out to clients, as an objective third party, what he or she is going through," she says. "Most times, clients see me while they are still [in the processing phase], and very emotional. They don't necessarily realize what's going on or exercise their best judgment. ... Being able to help people understand what they're going through, I think, is a strength."

In addition, Funge emphasizes her practice's ability to recognize the humanity of all parties involved in any given case—her client's, the opposition's, and that of any children the union has produced—"to keep the process as humane as possible," she says. She also insists that her clients treat themselves gently, because the pain and guilt of ending a marriage may tempt any individual to feel defeated.

"People think of divorce as a failure," she says, "but I don't think that."

She aims to ensure that all clients feel supported throughout the course of a family law dispute, yet she also maintains professionalism in each client-attorney relationship. Through no-nonsense, cost-effective service, she strives to keep every client well informed, as well as driven by realistic expectations.

"The court system can feel quite dehumanizing in a family law dispute, making one feel unheard or oppressed by 'the system,'" she says. "My 'value added' is my ability to prepare clients and help manage their expectations of the process. I'm probably going to tell you things you don't want to hear. I will tell you if your perception of fair is not necessarily how things are going to go. I'll tell you if you're holding onto a position you'll never win. This is a dated reference, but I'm a client's Spock."

One example of her straightforward

truths she shares with clients to help manage expectations: The process will always take longer than a client thinks. Another: No one truly "wins" or "loses" in most family law cases; rather, most cases involve a significant amount of compromise.

"I ultimately do what a client wants after we discuss the risks and consequences of

their position," she adds. "I will fight for a client if he or she says, 'I want to risk it.' That said, I won't sacrifice my reputation with the court on a position that's just beyond. The courts look very askance at extreme unreasonableness, and my credibility with the court is what my clients need and want."



"When you call my office, you get me. I just think it's faster and more efficient that way." —Ann Funge, Funge Family Law

Getting Through It

Funge has amassed a comprehensive directory of ancillary professional contacts in her two and a half decades of practice. In other words, she has at her disposal an array of resources designed to help clients in times of need—before, during, and after the divorce decree has been issued. In the past, for example, she has connected her clients with seasoned professionals in the worlds of wealth management and psychology to offer their respective expertise in the areas of personal finance and family therapy.

"My job is not to help you *get over* anything," she explains. "My job is to help you *get through* it."

That having been said, Funge takes great joy in seeing parties she has worked with flourish after periods of family strife.

"I love it when I get a holiday or thank you card," she says. "When people get remarried, they send me pictures from the wedding and they look like different people because the stress is gone and they have found their 'new normal.'"

In line with her wish to be accessible to as wide

an array of individuals as possible, Funge strives to keep her fees as affordable as possible. By keeping fixed costs low, she can keep her hourly rate "reasonable and within reach of most," she says.

"I'm a straight shooter," she adds. "I'm not going to tell a client what they want to hear, nor will I work to churn or perpetuate a fight. I'm my client's lawyer, not their friend. I like to be practical about things and, in being practical, that often creates cost-effectiveness. I'm not a fancy person or hands off. I am not going to have a team of people dealing with clients. When you call my office, you get me. I just think it's faster and more efficient that way." ■



FUNGE FAMILY LAW, LLC
fungefamilylaw.com

Radnor Financial Center, Suite F-200
150 N. Radnor-Chester Road
Radnor, Pa.
(610) 977-0888

Ten Penn Center, Suite 1845
1801 Market Street
Philadelphia, Pa.
(215) 667-8011