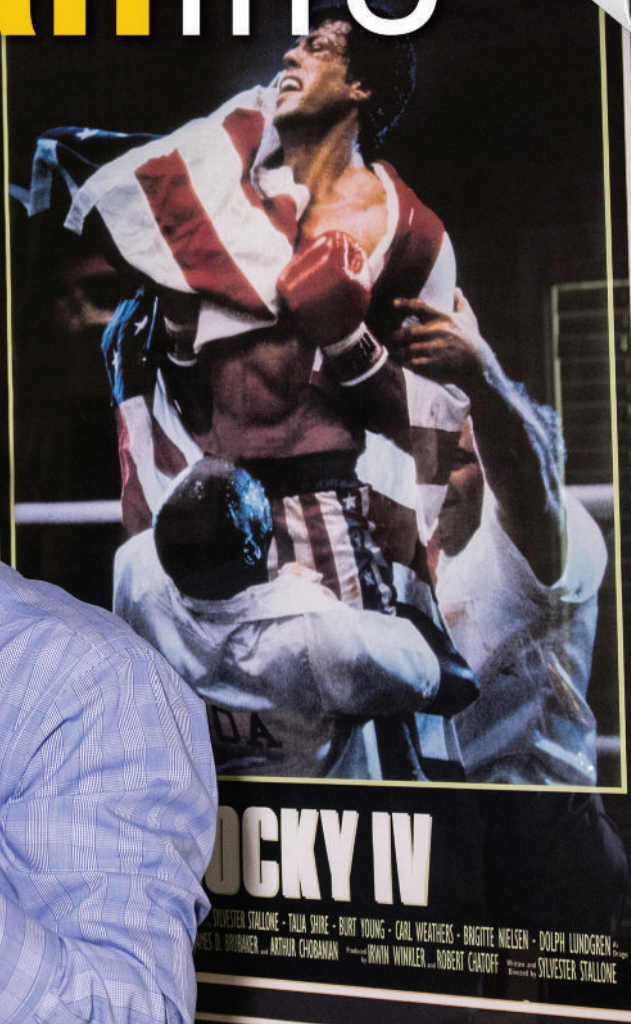


# suburban life



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# LEADING THROUGH A CRISIS

Guided by **Gregory P. LaMonaca**, **LaMonaca Law** uses innovation, technology, empathy, and teamwork to lead clients through divorce, custody issues, and life, among other challenging domestic matters.

**M**IDNIGHT HAS COME AND GONE, AND **GREGORY P. LAMONACA IS STILL ON HIS PHONE.** Rather than reading Twitter posts or scrolling through photos on Instagram, he's using the Slack app to compose an early-morning message for his team. The message may differ from day to day, but the purpose is always the same: to help LaMonaca Law's team members start the day focused and engaged.

The Slack messages symbolize everything LaMonaca and his law firm, the Media-based LaMonaca Law, stand for: preparation, perseverance, and inspiration. Such messages grew from "Virtual LaMonaca Law,"

an encompassing leadership initiative designed to keep the firm's 22-member team of attorneys and support staff connected, both to each other and to their clients. LaMonaca started the initiative prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, and it proved invaluable during a time when most Americans felt cut-off from the rest of the world.

"From that came what we now call 'Good Morning, LaMonaca Law'—'GMLL,' in shorthand," LaMonaca says. "I would put something educational or inspirational out to the team, usually in the middle of the night, because I almost never sleep. I have been doing that every single business

day since the beginning of the pandemic. Everyone on the team would see it and read it, and I would get up to 21 collaborative responses every day. My purpose is to help get everyone's mind in the right spot, ease any concerns they may have, and it helped me to know that everyone was doing OK."

The firm still had to keep moving cases forward, and to be cognizant of the bottom line, but this initiative signified something else. This was about leading in a time of profound crisis, and providing stability during an unstable and uncertain time.

The pandemic revealed a lot about organizations and their leaders. Where some leaders saw adversity, LaMonaca saw opportunity and a silver lining in the clouds. He used the shift in routine to renovate the firm's two buildings and to shore up its infrastructure—specifically, adding a fresh coat of paint, creating a new technology-equipped conference room, and investing in a professional film studio where he produces video campaigns that not only communicate, but also inspire, educate, and motivate. He credits his entire leadership team, Kristy Panella (practice manager), Patrick Dempsey Jr. (operations manager), and all team members for the success of the firm.

"No one could have predicted COVID-19, but effective leaders can prepare for unexpected things like 9/11, the financial crisis, or a pandemic," he says. "Financial literacy is one of our core values, so we

had the reserves we needed to fund our growth. Not only did we not lay anyone off, but we hired during the pandemic, and we gave pay raises and bonuses, because we were prepared and financially responsible.”

### ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD

LaMonaca Law’s evolution over the past few years, starting before COVID-19, has been notable to Lawrence C. Welsh, the firm’s chief legal counsel. When the pandemic hit, working remotely required some adjustments, but he says the firm did not miss a beat.

“Things like ‘GMLL’ became touchstones we could all count on every day,” Welsh says. “Greg calls himself our chief motivational officer, and he is. The culture here is quite unique. Tools like Slack have facilitated communication, collaboration, and camaraderie, all of which strengthen the commitment we have to each other and to our clients.

“We still communicate by email externally, but internally, Slack has replaced email,” he continues. “It enables us to have multiple channels, so every day we are having multiple discussions, with different groupings, without being in the same ZIP code, much less the same building. The communication among all of us, starting with ‘GMLL’ each day, becomes its own being, and as each of us feed into it, it reflects back to us how it has been fed by the others.”

Chris Casserly, an attorney who joined the firm in 2013 and was named partner in 2019, suggests technology has made the firm not only more collaborative but also more efficient.

“Our line of work lends itself to round-the-clock availability, because issues arise outside of normal business hours,” he says. “If I post something on Slack after hours, more often than not, I get a response, and sometimes several. It just creates an ever-flowing, ongoing web of communication, so it doesn’t take a lot of effort to keep cases

The LaMonaca Law legal team includes (left to right) Teresa A. Mallon, senior legal counsel; Christopher Casserly, partner; Gregory P. LaMonaca, founding member; and Lawrence C. Welsh, chief legal counsel.

moving forward.”

Casserly credits the culture that LaMonaca put in place.

“There are a lot of great attorneys and law firms on the Main Line,” he adds. “The reason we stress culture and our unique approach so much is that it truly does set us apart from other firms. There’s more of a sense that we understand and support one another, and the client gets the benefit of that when we go into court.”

### PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

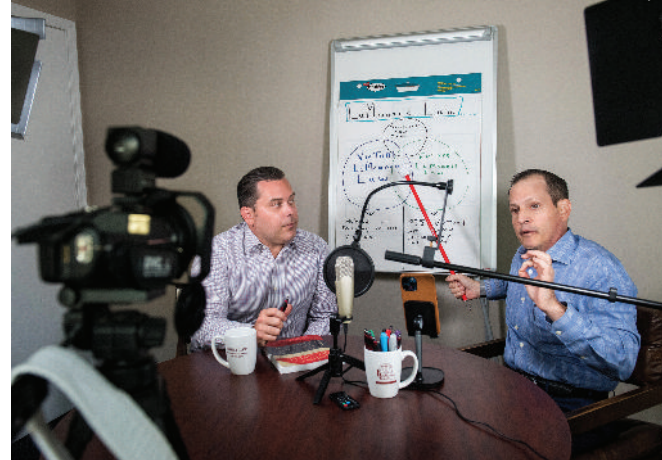
At this stage of his career, having solidified his reputation as one of the region’s foremost family law attorneys, LaMonaca is focused on helping others grow. Over the last four decades, he has taken countless personal development courses, and he recently completed Tony Robbins Mastery University to guide his evolution as a leader and a developer of talent.

He’s also a bibliophile, meaning books—particularly those about growth and leadership—are something of an addiction. When he finds a good book, he shares what he has learned from it with his team. One example: He gave a copy of John C. Maxwell’s *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* to each team member to read, and used the newly created film studio to condense each of the 21 lessons into a video clip, shared sequentially with the team via Slack.

LaMonaca is not only a prolific reader, but also a prolific writer. So far, he has three books bearing his byline—*The Brutally Honest Life Management Journal*, *The Brutally Honest Pennsylvania Divorce, Custody & Financial Survival Guide*, and *The Brutally Honest Guide to Sur-thriving Generation Now*—with a fourth on the way. The next book, which he expects to deliver in early 2022, will cover a familiar theme: overcoming adversity and leading through a crisis.

LaMonaca credits his parents for his desire to lead. His father, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, and his mother, a homemaker, taught him lessons about sacrifice, selflessness, and survival. Their sacrifices and support helped him defeat an extraordinarily rare health issue—“I’m the only person on the planet with my condition,” he says—which presented more than its share of challenges. Difficulties aside, the experience taught him resiliency. While his father’s passing in April 2020 left a huge void in his life, the lessons learned are eternal.

He’s not afraid to admit that he finds inspiration in a



During the pandemic, LaMonaca Law created a professional film studio to produce video campaigns designed to inspire, educate, and motivate others.

source of pride for many fellow Philadelphians: the pugnacious fighter, Rocky Balboa.

“I know what it’s like to be, and to fight for, the underdog,” he says. “The *Rocky* movies teach you every life lesson you need—how to overcome adversity, loyalty, how to get back on your feet, how to be criticized and deal with it, how to be humble in victory. It’s also about love. Just like Rocky and Adrian, my wife Monica is my partner and my best friend. We started LaMonaca Law together, working out of our first house, 27 years ago. We met at age 14, and we’ve been together ever since. In my practice, unfortunately, I see the opposite of that every day.”

LaMonaca Law has developed into one of the area’s the largest law firms devoted to family law. The firm provides expert legal counsel and representation in matters pertaining to divorce, custody, and support, among other aspects of family law throughout the Main Line and beyond.

“We care deeply, and empathize with each of our clients,” LaMonaca says. “As a team, we share a common purpose to fight for our clients’ rights. We offer a unique service to assemble a custom fit team to match each client’s needs.

“Our culture is everything,” he continues. “We all learn and grow as a team. When our team members are doing well in their personal lives, the benefits transfer to the firm and to giving exceptional value for our clients. We want to get to know [clients] at the core level, understand their fears, and address and alleviate those fears right away. We’re here to show them that, like Rocky, they too can get back on their feet and thrive. At the end of the day, helping people sleep better at night is why we do what we do.” ■

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