

# suburban life

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# A Legal Compass for Life's Challenges

For nearly 100 years, the law firm of **Duffy North** has been solving clients' problems through a combination of legal acumen, high-touch service and a commitment to the communities they serve.

by **MELISSA D. SULLIVAN** photography by **JODY ROBINSON**

***Ask the attorneys of Duffy North and they will tell you they believe they were born to practice law.***

"I think it was pre-ordained," says Laura M. Mercuri, managing partner of Duffy North, short for Duffy, North, Wilson, Thomas & Nicholson LLP. "I'm the middle child, the mediator, the one who's always trying to fix things for people. And," she adds with a laugh, "I like a good argument."

Today, Mercuri's work in transactional law, business law, estate administration, and real estate enables her to help her clients resolve everyday legal problems.

Likewise, partner Joshua S. Ganz knew from an early age that he would one day be an attorney.

"I think on career day in first or second grade, I dressed up as a lawyer," says Ganz, who concentrates on labor and employment law, business law, real estate, and commercial litigation, as well as trademark and copyright issues. "It was pre-determined from there."

Considered one of the original Montgomery County law firms, Hatboro-based Duffy North has been a fixture of the community since the firm's founding in 1928.

"Josh and I are the fourth generation of lawyers in this practice," says Mercuri. "And then we have a fifth generation. We have a really high-quality staff of paralegals and secretaries, many of whom have been with the firm for decades. They are, and always have been, an integral part of this firm."

Duffy North serves individuals, businesses, and banks in the areas of real estate, business formation, and estate planning and administration, as well as matters involving franchise law, employment law, and civil litigation. Although the firm is focused primarily on serving Montgomery and Bucks counties, Duffy North also works nationally and internationally.

"People come to us from near and far—from Horsham, Upper Dublin, and Doylestown to Arizona, New Jersey, and Nebraska," says Ganz. "We certainly have our footprint throughout the entire region and country."

## Personal Touch

Duffy North prides itself on the close relationships its attorneys and staff form with clients. Ganz, who has been rated as a Super Lawyer for fourteen consecutive years, says the firm knows the intimate details of each client's case, but it also gets to know about people's family members and what's going on in their lives. At the end of the day, he believes clients think of the firm's legal team not only as their lawyers, but also as their friends.

"Laura's clients really love her," Ganz says of Mercuri. "She takes that extra step by going above and beyond to show clients that she truly cares, and they reciprocate."

Ever modest, Mercuri insists that her work is just an extension of who she is. At the same time, she asserts that it is vital for lawyers to be approachable and accessible.

"If somebody came to me and had a problem, even if it's not a legal problem, I'm going to do my best to help them," she says. "I believe that my services should be available to anyone who needs them."





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These people have real problems, and those problems are very important to me.”

Ganz even reminisced about the time he served as an officiant for the wedding of two longtime clients in the Duffy North lobby. “I married them and then updated their estate plans,” he says, “all in one day.”

Ganz believes this hands-on approach has played a significant role in Duffy North’s success, even amid the chaos and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. When normal office life was upended and everyone had to work remotely, the firm ensured that there was always someone available to take a client’s phone call so they heard a friendly voice when they needed it most.

“We do what the big shops in the city can do,” says Ganz, “but closer to home and with more of a personal touch.”

Duffy North’s ties to the local community are a significant part of the value the firm provides to its clients. Its attorneys live in the community, belong to the community, and remain active in the bar association, according to Ganz. Those relationships, he believes, contribute to positive outcomes for clients both in and out of the courtroom.

“Other lawyers know us,” he says. “We’re tough, and we’re going to fight tooth and nail for our clients, but we also maintain good relationships with other members of the bar, because that helps us solve problems for our clients.”

Though Duffy North has broad experience in business, litigation, and estate law, both Ganz and Mercuri are quick to say that they don’t think of the firm as a “jack of all trades.” Those same community ties that empower Duffy North attorneys to provide pragmatic advice also enable them to connect their clients with whatever resources their cases require.

“We are essentially our clients’ legal concierge,” says Ganz. “If we can’t help

directly, we’re the first ones to say, ‘Hey, that’s not our specialty, but here is the right person,’ or, ‘Here are a couple of people we would urge you to call to solve your problem.’”

Adds Mercuri, “I like to say I’m your family attorney, but I don’t do family law. Even if it’s not a legal issue, they come to me, again, as a counselor, as someone who can direct them to where they need to go.”

### Looking Forward

Ganz realizes people have many options when choosing a firm for counsel and representation. When deciding on a lawyer, he suggests that people consider three important factors: experience, reputation, and transparency.

“You need to know that they have the experience in the area that they’re working on,” he says. “You have to get a sense of what their reputation is in the community and certainly, that they’re upfront about what it is going to cost.”

Finally, it’s crucial for an attorney to be forthright with a client about the practical implications of a dispute. He likes to tell prospective clients the following: “If a lawyer ever tells you that it’s a 100 percent guarantee that you’re going to win, run far away from that lawyer, because there are no 100 percent guarantees in this world. Trust the lawyer who provides several perspectives, because you know they are thinking through the entire problem.”

As for the future, Duffy North will continue building on its decades-long reputation, adding the next generation of skilled attorneys who are committed to helping clients solve the problems that keep them awake at night. Even as Duffy North evolves and expands, its attorneys insist the firm’s growth will in no way dull the firm’s personality or diminish its close connection with clients.



Laura M. Mercuri, managing partner of Duffy North, focuses her legal practice in transactional law, business law, estate administration, and real estate.



Partner Joshua S. Ganz concentrates on labor and employment law, business law, real estate, and commercial litigation, as well as trademark and copyright issues.

“We’ve been here for 100 years,” says Ganz. “We’re not going anywhere. Laura and I, along with Bruce Nicholson, Chris Manno, Mary Sims, and our staff, like to think of ourselves as your legal compass, guiding you through business and personal challenges.” ■