

suburban life

At Messa & Associates, **Joseph L. Messa Jr.** and his team of attorneys go the extra mile to advocate for clients in complex cases involving serious injuries or even death.

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A Fighting Chance

BY MATT COSENTINO

PHOTOS BY ALISON DUNLAP

AT MESSA & ASSOCIATES, JOSEPH L. MESSA JR. AND HIS TEAM OF ATTORNEYS GO THE EXTRA MILE TO ADVOCATE FOR CLIENTS IN COMPLEX CASES INVOLVING SERIOUS INJURIES OR EVEN DEATH.

Philadelphia may be the sixth-largest city in America, but in many ways, it still feels like a small town that is often overlooked or underrated. That underdog mentality is one that Joseph L. Messa Jr. can relate to well, not just because he is a Philly native who grew up in Germantown, but also because in his law career he often finds himself fighting for everyday folks who are seeking justice against seemingly insurmountable odds.

Messa & Associates, P.C., which Messa founded in January 2001, is a personal injury firm devoted to giving its clients and their families peace of mind and financial security following a catastrophic event. Whether a victim has suffered illness, serious injury, or even wrongful death as a result of medical malpractice, a defective product, a workplace accident, or an automobile crash, Messa and his team will stand up and make sure the victim's voice is heard.

"Constantly in these situations, we're outmanned and outspent, and we're taking on big corporations or healthcare institutions that have all the resources in the world, but I sort of like being the underdog and being able to help the little guy," he says. "As a huge Philadelphia sports fan my whole life, we've always been an underdog, and I think the city is

looked at that way. We always have to fight and go through adversity to have success.”

Messa’s ability to persevere and outlast his opponents has led to seven- and eight-figure verdicts and settlements in complex matters locally and across the country. His dogged work ethic, commanding courtroom presence, and experience from more than three decades as a trial lawyer have yielded results for a wide range of clients.

He credits his upbringing for helping to set him on this path. His father, a union employee who spent 30 years at PennDOT, pursued his dream of becoming an attorney in his 50s, and would take the train to the University of Baltimore for night classes after working to support his family during the day. Although he never got the chance to practice, Messa’s father did earn his degree, and that left a lasting impression on his son.

“That in some ways shaped me, along with my mother being a hardworking real estate agent,” Messa says. “It instilled in me at a young age the work ethic that I have and my mindset going into my practice of outworking anybody for my clients. My parents were firm believers in education, and they sacrificed to send my brother and I to private schools and universities. I got to experience different backgrounds in my neighborhood in Germantown and through my studies, and that gave me flexibility and the ability to relate to people from all walks of life.”

Messa founded a house-painting business to help put himself through college, and graduated with honors from Temple University School of Law. He started his career for a large firm representing the defense in personal injury cases, but soon realized it wasn’t for him and left to join another firm as a plaintiff’s attorney. He eventually branched out on his own with just one other lawyer and a few staff members, but Messa & Associates has since grown to 16 attorneys, all with a similar mindset. Messa calls them “true believers” who are passionate about helping people who have been harmed by negligence or a defective product.

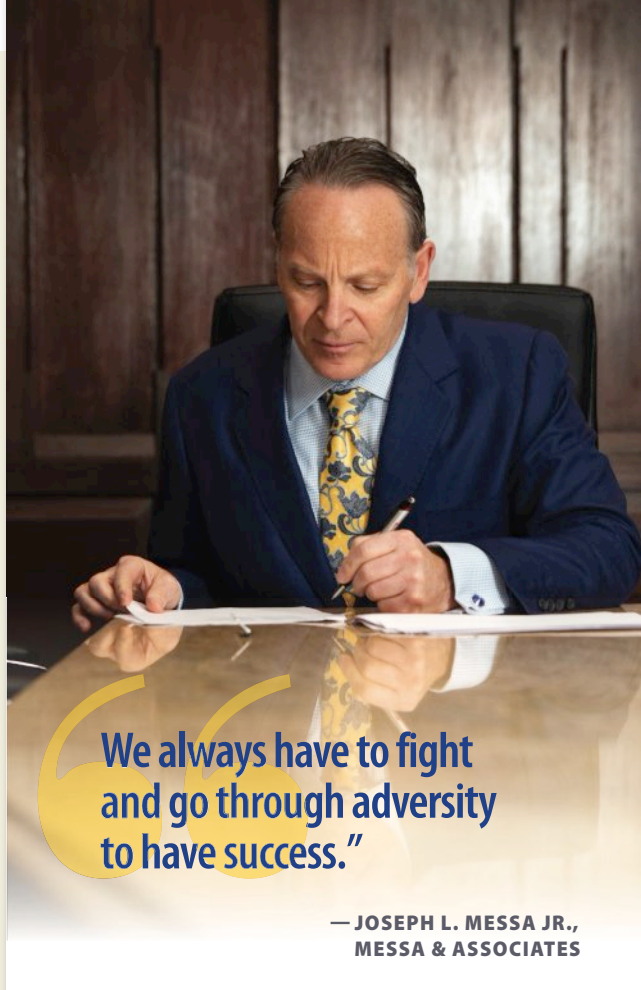
“If you’re not a true believer and you’re just looking for a job and a paycheck, you’re not going to take every case seriously and fight for these people like they’re your own family,” he says. “That’s what I believe in and what I want our firm to do.”

There are countless examples of clients whose lives have been positively impacted by Messa and his team. For example, Luke Vilmeyer, a U.S. Army veteran, sued 3M Corporation for severe hearing damage he suffered as a result of defective earplugs he used while in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. He received a \$50 million verdict, which was recently upheld on posttrial motions by the trial court.

“These are the people who protect all of us in our nation and uphold our ideals,” Messa says. “The fact that a company would put profits before the safety of anyone, let alone our soldiers, is something that disgusts me.”

Messa & Associates is also involved in mass tort litigation such as the Camp LeJeune case, in which service members and their families stationed at the base in North Carolina between the early 1970s through the ’90s have been diagnosed with cancer as a result of a contaminated water supply. Another high-profile case involves a suit against the manufacturer of CPAP machines tied to lung injuries and cancer.

The firm also handles many birth trauma cases in which children suffered brain injuries from improper care in the labor and delivery process, as well as child injuries at daycare centers or play-



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MESSA & ASSOCIATES

grounds, such as an injury from a defective sliding board. “When somebody hurts a child, those are the cases that particularly make me angry and want to work even harder,” Messa says.

Finally, the firm is involved in a significant case against Uber. The complaint has to do with customers of the ride-sharing company unknowingly giving up their constitutional right to a jury trial in disputes arising from their use of the service.

“Hopefully, this will set precedent in regard to Uber rides and other online businesses that try to do the same thing,” Messa says. “If you want someone to waive a constitutional right, it should be a knowing waiver so people know and they’ve been informed.”

Clearly, there are very few boring days at work for Messa, who still gets energized by going to court and knowing that the preparation he and his team have put in will translate into great results for his clients. The firm is able to work with clients who speak Spanish, among other languages. No matter the case, Messa & Associates strive to make sure each client has his or her voice heard, and never feeling “like just a number.”

“The clients are the ones who ultimately are most impacted by the case,” Messa says. “Many times, this is the most significant event in their lives, and they’ve been seriously harmed or lost a loved one. Our lawyers take that seriously, work hard for them, and the clients feel like part of our family, just like I want everyone who works here to feel like they’re part of our family.” ■



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