

# suburban life

Chong Law Firm  
지미정 변호사



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# PAYING HOMAGE

As the founder of **Chong Law Firm**, personal injury attorney **Jimmy Chong** honors his parents' sacrifices by helping those whose lives have been altered by personal tragedies.



**L**ike his two older brothers before him—one a chiropractor, the other a schoolteacher—Jimmy Chong was determined to dedicate his life to a meaningful, service-based profession. The brothers' career ambitions grew out of an intense desire to honor their parents, South Korean immigrants who came to the United States with no money or college education in pursuit of a better life for their children.

By his mid-20s, however, Chong was still struggling to discover the right fit. He finally found it with the encouragement of his father, by attending law school. He has since forged a successful career as a personal

injury attorney that has allowed him to not only help thousands of clients facing serious health issues, but also to uplift his community through charitable efforts and local politics.

Chong continues to be inspired by his parents' example. The enterprise he founded, Chong Law Firm, specializes in assisting people who have been injured in automobile accidents or through the negligence of others, including slip-and-falls, dog bites, premises liability, and medical malpractice. The firm also handles wrongful-death cases.

"Through my parents, I saw the struggles of what it's like to not understand systems, to not understand the culture, to be the minority, and to not be fully informed,"

Chong says. "I remember growing up, my parents told me and my brothers that whatever we decided to do should be something to help people like them in a similar situation. They came to this country to give us more opportunities, and now we try to do something positive in the community."

While Chong Law Firm works on a wide variety of cases at its three offices—Lansdale, Philadelphia, and Wilmington, Delaware—Chong recognizes that his firm is often the first foray into the legal system for many clients. They may be confused by the language used by the courts and insurance companies, or stressed about their injuries' effects on their lives, so he and his team always emphasize compassion and education.

"I believe we owe it to them, even if it's something we've gone through a million times, to take our time and inform them what needs to be done," he says. "Communication is key for us. We need to be available to our clients, we need to empathize, and we need to set aside any of our frustrations and concentrate on the client. Anything they don't know, we really need to explain it to them in a manner they do know."

The firm's staff includes a Korean interpreter and a Spanish speaker, further benefiting those who speak limited English. In fact, while Chong did not necessarily set out to hire a multinational team, it organically evolved that way; his employees range from Indian- and Haitian-Americans to Caucasians to a native of Peru.

"We have a diverse firm with a diverse range of experiences," he says, "and I believe that's important because it helps us connect with and understand people better."

Megan Sanfrancesco is a senior trial attorney at the firm who became interested in the law as a criminal justice major at the University of Delaware. She also had an interest in teaching and went on to earn her Master of Arts from The College of New Jersey, but remained connected to the law while holding administrative positions at several firms. She eventually landed at the Widener University School of Law. Since earning her J.D., she has practiced in both the private and public sectors.

Chong first met Sanfrancesco about



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Megan Sanfrancesco is a senior attorney at the firm. She and Chong met while they were opposing counsel in a complex case that was resolved in the best interest of all parties.

eight years ago when she was a First Assistant County Attorney for New Castle County in Delaware; they were opposing counsel in a complex case that was resolved in the best interest of all parties. He was so impressed with her that he jokingly offered her a job, and about a year later she called him to seriously discuss it.

"It was the best joke I ever made," he says. "She is a lawyer's lawyer but with empathy and respect for all people. I really do learn from her every time I speak with her."

Chong, Sanfrancesco, and the rest of

the team—attorney Katherine Shea White, paralegals Yasmine Roc and Aishwarya Vernagiri, case manager and native Spanish speaker Felipe Celi, Korean interpreter Liah Kwak, and receptionist Joy Harrah Fe Rodriguez—approach every case as if it's going to trial; they prepare their clients accordingly, keep them in the loop throughout the process, and encourage them to call with any questions. The goal is to make them "whole again," including in ways beyond large financial settlements. What's most important to the client, for example, could mean making a certain

intersection safer or forcing a company to better train its drivers.

"A lot of our clients just want to make sure that no one has to go through what they went through," he adds. "They want to create a safer world or a safer community, and my hat's off to so many of them, because a lot of what they're doing is not directly for them. They want their negative experience to benefit others, and it's amazing how strong some of these people are, because they're going through life-changing events."

The law had a profound effect on Chong's life, too. His success has enabled him to make a difference in Montgomery County, where he resides with his family. He serves on the boards of the Montgomery County Workforce Development Board and the Montgomery County Community College Foundation, and was elected to the Lower Gwynedd Township Board of Supervisors.

"My law school degree opened the door for me to be able to help a township that I love," he says. "I enjoyed living in Wilmington, where I grew up, and in Philadelphia, but I've never lived in a place like Lower Gwynedd. I wake up in the morning and pinch myself because I can't believe I live in an area I love so much." ■

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