


# suburban life

TOP ATTORNEYS  
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Six of the firm's 17 attorneys  
not shown

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**At van der Veen, Hartshorn & Levin, dedicated attorneys provide excellent service across many practice areas to every client who walks through the door.**

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# Powerful Representation for All

At **van der Veen, Hartshorn & Levin**, dedicated attorneys provide excellent service across many practice areas to every client who walks through the door.

by **MATT COSENTINO** | photos by **JEFF ANDERSON**

**C**onsidering its lawyers have represented everyone from President Donald Trump to movie stars and successful business owners, one might suspect that van der Veen, Hartshorn & Levin is a firm strictly reserved for the rich and powerful. But as attorney Adam Leasure learned on his first day on the job eight years ago, straight from founder Michael T. van der Veen, nothing could be further from the truth.

“We have a culture of how to treat each case, and it’s the same regardless of who the client is,” Leasure says. “That’s been instilled in me since I started and it’s part of our practice every day. We have cases in the criminal realm ranging from traffic tickets to murder charges, and they all get the same attention to detail and the same work ethic. It doesn’t matter who you are, you’re entitled to competent and excellent representation, which is what we do.”

That was van der Veen’s goal when he established the firm in 2014, and it hasn’t changed even as his profile has grown throughout Philadelphia, the region, and across the country with such cases as the acquittal of President Trump in his second impeachment trial. Equally important to him is offering clients expertise across a wide range of specialties.

“We excel in practice areas that are most important to families: personal injury, criminal defense, divorce, commercial litigation, small family business representation, employment law, trusts and estates,” van der Veen says. “We really are unique, for a firm our size to excel in as many practice areas as we do, and that was very thoughtfully planned out.”

Such versatility appealed to young lawyers like Leasure and Kaitlin McCaffrey, who previously worked for a defense firm in New Jersey before joining van der Veen, Hartshorn & Levin.

“I think the one thing that wasn’t a great fit for me at my old firm was that it was very specialized,” she says. “The firm was very sectioned off in that you were hired for one position and you did one thing. There wasn’t a lot of opportunity to diversify.

“I always had an interest in criminal defense, but I knew that I didn’t want to do all criminal defense,” she continues. “I really wanted a chance to do civil rights actions or different kinds of other civil lawsuits that are not obviously criminal defense. When I saw the opportunity at a smaller firm that seemed to have a wide array of practice areas where you could jump in and do a bunch of different things, it was a perfect fit.”

Abigail Gustafson clerked at the firm before becoming an associate attorney. Although she focuses much of her practice on criminal defense and appellate cases, she also savors the opportunity to work in pro bono and charitable causes.

“That’s huge to Mike,” she says. “Ever since I started working here, I’ve known how important pro bono is to him. He likes to say that pro bono is the food for the soul of our firm. It’s a privilege to work for someone who encourages us to do free legal work and to give back. I’ll do collections cases, landlord-tenant cases, situations where people ordinarily don’t have the funds for an attorney. More often than not, they’re very grateful that someone is listening to them and helping them through it.”

The firm’s roster of attorneys includes talented young lawyers who bring a fresh perspective, as well as seasoned veterans who have been in the field for decades. It includes people like Jerry D. Rassias, a trial attorney and former assistant district attorney with years of courtroom experience handling all kinds of serious cases. He is



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—MICHAEL T. VAN DER VEEN, VAN DER VEEN, HARTSHORN & LEVIN



known for his preparation, aggressiveness in court, and focus on fulfilling every client’s need.

“I have been an attorney for over 36 years, more than 25 were managing my own law practice,” adds Michael Troiani, a partner with the firm and a mentor to Rassias. “When I met with Mike van der Veen and his team, I saw in them the same passion and commitment to their clients as I had possessed while operating

my own firm. It was a simple decision for me to join this firm and become a part of this team. There is a culture here that doesn’t just settle for excellence, but achieves expectations far beyond excellence for our clients. I’m sure there are many lawyers and law firms that say the same rhetoric about how hard they work or how much they care about their clients. I have seen many, many lawyers and law firms over the years, and I can truly say this is a

special place.”

The firm’s open-door policy encourages lawyers to walk down the hall to glean advice from a colleague. That mentorship starts at the top with van der Veen himself.

“It’s interesting, because if you really want to accomplish what I want to accomplish—being a full-service law firm to a family—it often involves handling more than one matter for a client,” he says. “There’s constant collaboration from the lawyers in the various areas working together to get a 360-degree knowledge of and representation for the client. We have some of the greatest lawyers in the city, and that includes the next generation. No one comes close to the brilliant, passionate, and hardworking young lawyers we have.”

Leasure considers it an honor to have that kind of leadership.

“I work hard and I have a lot of good teachers here, and osmosis is definitely helpful, too,” he says. “My relationship with Mike and the firm means a lot, and I don’t want to work anywhere else. The people here are more like a family than co-workers.”

All the firm’s lawyers embrace the responsibility of carrying on the tradition of powerful representation that van der Veen has followed throughout his three-plus decades in law.

“Regardless of the department or area of the law you’re in, it’s challenging,” Gustafson says. “But Mike understands that there’s a lot at stake for our clients, so he’ll never put someone who is not capable of doing it in that position. Anyone who is coming here to work is someone he feels strongly is capable of holding that responsibility.”

“It’s a little nerve wracking to know he has that much confidence in us, but I like to think we can meet it,” McCaffrey adds. “Nowadays young attorneys change firms all the time, but a lot of us have been here for a while and we’re very close. We’ve all gotten very accustomed to the firm and its dynamic. We’ve seen it grow in several ways and we look forward to collaborating with Mike and [his wife] Marion on continuing to grow the firm.” ■

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