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When Leadership Matters

by Matt Cosentino | photos by Jody Robinson

Clients facing DUI or criminal charges receive the guidance they need from Lee Ciccarelli and his experienced team of attorneys at Ciccarelli Law.

As an attorney with nearly four decades of experience, Lee Ciccarelli understands better than most just how quickly a DUI arrest or criminal charge can turn someone's world upside down.

When those clients turn to him in a panic as they face consequences they may not fully comprehend, his job becomes about much more than just knowing the law.

"A good lawyer understands crisis management," says Ciccarelli, the founder of West Chester-based Ciccarelli Law. "When our clients first call us, they're often panicking. They could be questioning themselves, are urgent for answers, and need an experienced hand with a calm, thoughtful, and reassuring tone to provide leadership and direction.

"Ultimately," he continues, "they want a leader who is knowledgeable and experienced, understands the process, can talk in plain language, and is going to fight for them."

Those instincts were honed by Ciccarelli as a child, when he grew up as the oldest of eight siblings in his family and became accustomed to others looking to him for guidance.

He has been fighting for clients since he became a lawyer in 1989. Since 1999, he has filled the same role for his team of attorneys and for his clients at Ciccarelli Law, a firm specializing in criminal defense, DUI defense, and juvenile law, as well as personal injury and motor vehicle accident cases.

DUIs and criminal accusations in particular can have far-reaching results for a family, especially when a teenager is involved. There can be an impact on their reputation or relationships, and often those clients feel anxiety or embarrassment about the possibility of going to court or ultimately being imprisoned.

"I am sensitive to my approach with my clients and their case because I'm concerned with my client's wellbeing," Ciccarelli says. "I'm not going to just say, 'It is what it is,' or 'Sorry, you're going to jail.' I am a believer that, 'It is what we make it.'"

The Ciccarelli legal team does not judge clients on their alleged crimes; the issue is whether the government can prove a case and have the determination and integrity to put the Commonwealth on the defensive. Because the burden of proof is on the prosecution, Ciccarelli focuses on understanding the evidence and giving his clients honest advice about the possible outcomes.

"No one wants a lawyer who doesn't take responsibility and pride in their efforts; they want someone who fights for their clients wherever the evidence takes them," he says. "Lawyers need to be guided by doing the right thing and not motivated by profit. The question is: Are we worthy of redemption? We are in the business of helping people get to a better place than what led them to being accused of a crime."



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make me and my firm
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—LEE CICCARELLI, CICCARELLI LAW

In DUI cases, the person might be battling a substance abuse issue or struggling with depression or anxiety. Ciccarelli and his team offer unwavering support in those circumstances.

“Clients appreciate that we have their back,” he adds. “We’re thinking about the big picture. Whatever happened on a Saturday night four weeks ago is in the past; we have to focus on today and tomorrow, and how we’re going to get our client through this situation in a way that they’re going to have a positive future.”

Building a foundation for the future is even more important in juvenile court cases. While Ciccarelli strives to be an advocate and defend those young clients just as fervently as anyone else, juvenile court is also about addressing any needs the child has.

Those issues might be tied to family problems, mental health issues, substance abuse, poor school performance, etc. The best part for Ciccarelli is seeing them through those issues and meeting them again in five or 10 years, when they have overcome the obstacles they faced.

“I’ve been working in juvenile court for most of my career, in large part because it’s so rewarding,” he says. “If there’s an issue that a 15- or 16-year-old is facing in life that makes it more likely they’re going to face charges, then it’s an opportunity to help them get on track.”

Besides Ciccarelli, the firm has five other lawyers who practice DUI and criminal

defense. Having the support of a team, rather than one lawyer or a solo practitioner, is an incredible benefit to the practice and its clients.

“In our office, we have team meetings and we discuss the cases,” he says. “Most criminal defense lawyers are solo practitioners and don’t have a staff. If they’re sick, what happens to the client? If they’re too busy, what happens to the client? If they’re on vacation, what happens to the client? The advantage to our firm is the combination of experience, the supervision, and the resources in terms of criminal lawyers, availability, and staff.”

Every client has direct access to Ciccarelli himself. The firm is also ready to help during off hours, because crises often happen outside the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

“When it’s an emergency over the weekend and you call our office, we work hard to make ourselves available when our clients have an afterhours emergency,” he says. “It’s your crisis and you want someone to be there for you.”

That approach is why so many clients end up referring family and friends to Ciccarelli Law.

Ciccarelli has been previously recognized by *Suburban Life* as a top criminal defense and DUI lawyer. He has been listed repeatedly as a Super Lawyer in criminal defense, DUI, and personal injury. He is a top-rated criminal defense, DUI, and personal injury lawyer on Justia and Avvo. He has been recognized as

a Top 100 Trial Lawyer by The National Trial Lawyers Association, and he has received the Ten Best Client Satisfaction Award from the American Institute of DUI/DWI Attorneys.

Those accolades, however, pale in comparison to the satisfaction he receives from leading clients to a successful outcome.

“I’ve been a lawyer since 1989, so this is my 37th year,” he says. “There are a lot of lawyers who start to think about retirement at that point, but I love doing this. I enjoy getting on the phone and talking to people, and I enjoy trying to figure out what their problem is and to give them advice that is consequential to them so that they can move on.”

“If you don’t care, or you’re just doing the job for money, you’re not going to have a successful law practice,” he continues. “Care and compassion are the things that make me and my firm stand out.” ■



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