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11:55 pm - July 31, 2013 — Updated: 11:34 am - August 09, 2013

## Legal Eagles

By **Rebecca Bauer**

The help of a lawyer can mean a clear difference between a secure future and grim loss. Legal consequences can jeopardize what we value most: family, home, health and finances. Establishing a relationship with an attorney before falling into dire straits is a smart, preventive step to take.

Rocky McElhaney, Josh Mayo and Stacy Neisler are three attorneys with varied practices and life experiences who share their advice on handling legal matters.

“By a quick read of any local news headline, it is easy to see that the legal system, and the rules that govern it, are not always clear. Anyone who has a legal issue should at least consult with a lawyer, due to the many complexities that come with even the simplest legal issues,” says Franklin attorney Josh Mayo.



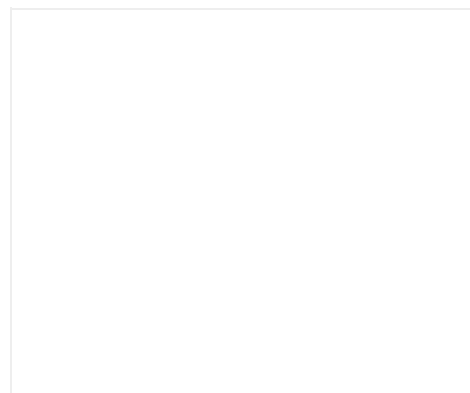
Rocky McElhaney

### When do you need a lawyer?

If finances or freedom are in jeopardy, legal counsel is necessary. Peace of mind comes from consulting with a professional on matters like drafting a will, estate planning, business contracts, or family issues like divorce and child custody. When unforeseen circumstances arise, individuals need – and deserve – to know the law and their rights.

Stacy Neisler has a solo practice in Spring Hill concentrating on family law and estate planning, handling divorces, custody disputes, child support, adoptions, wills, trusts, estates and powers of attorney.

Neisler advises, “You never want to feel pressured into finding an attorney at the last minute when a need arises. It is important to be proactive and have an attorney at the onset of a dispute



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to avoid making a mistake or losing the opportunity to exercise all of your rights and options. It is better to establish a relationship with an attorney who you trust and are comfortable with so that you always know who to call if the need arises. I am a resource to my clients to help make stressful situations less stressful for them.”

Consulting with a lawyer can clarify the need for representation and what is required. Don't shy away for fear of costs. Many civil attorneys don't collect a fee unless they win the case and most firms offer free initial consultations.

Neisler, for example, covers three key questions upon meeting the first time: the process and how they will get results, the cost, and estimated time frame. Costs for estate planning are typically a flat-fee, while family cases are an hourly rate since they may not know exactly how long it will take. A potential client can walk in, get the information they need and walk out without obligation.

Mayo says, "I will give all clients straight forward assessment of their legal matter, and inform them of the pros and cons of litigation prior to retaining me as their attorney." He adds, "My clients and their loved-ones deserve the advice of a lawyer who considers the facts of their particular situation. Clients deserve legal advice that is correct, complete and up-to-date."

For McElhane, he advises, "The best time to get us involved is as early as possible. The insurance companies have investigators and analysts picking apart the lives of the injured as soon as they learn that a wreck happened, typically the day of the wreck. The best way for us to fight back is to bring the fight early." As a reassurance to his clients, he says, "They don't pay for us to work for them on the front end. We only get paid when we win their case."

### One of Nashville's Leading Law Firms

The Rocky McElhane Law Firm is a Nashville-based injury and accident law firm that represents "the people, not the powerful" across Tennessee and throughout the Southeast. They have secured multiple, million-dollar settlements and jury verdicts for clients and in state and federal courts. The premiere law firm has grown to a staff of nineteen, including six lawyers, and has gained a reputation for "the hard-nosed fight it brings to every case," as McElhane likes to say, and the successful results those efforts have brought to the families they have represented. Particular cases include personal injury, brain injury, auto and tractor-trailer accidents and loss of a loved one.

This past June, the Tennessee Association for Justice presented McElhane with the Paladin Award, a high honor in response to his extraordinary impact on the civil justice system for Tennesseans. Since 2008, he has been invited to join the Top 100 Trial Lawyers for the state by the National Trial Lawyers Association and was included in the Nashville Business Journal's Best of the Bar publication from 2007 to 2010. Additionally, he has been named in the Super Lawyers' list of Rising Stars for the past two years.

McElhane has worked on a number of high-profile cases including the pro-bono representation to Helen Bailey, the former civil rights activist threatened with foreclosure on her home by JPMorgan, and winning a landmark decision that reopened hundreds of employees' cases against General Motors.

He's garnered an impressive list of million dollar verdicts such as winning \$1.25 million for a client in a wrongful death case and securing a \$4 million settlement for a construction worker who had suffered severe burns in an industrial work site explosion.

In September, McElhane is scheduled to handle a week-long arbitration against a billion dollar insurance company refusing to pay fair compensation to the wife and daughter of a grandfather killed in an auto accident. Rocky is fighting, as well, for the grandsons who were in the vehicle with their grandfather when the wreck happened.

This talented team is equipped with strong case management skills and latest technology in computer animation and accident reconstruction that are used to present compelling cases to juries and judges at trial.

Their mission is simple: maximum recovery and maximum compensation. "We treat everybody like we treat each other, with respect and like family" For every client, Rocky attests, "They deserve the highest quality medical care, to get better, and to get their life back."

McElhane concludes, "The most troubling part of my job is heartless insurance companies who



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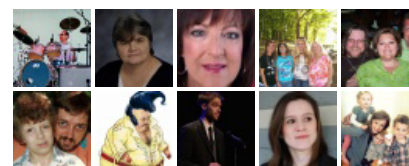


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refuse to pay adequate compensation, for not taking responsibility.” But, he adds, “The hugs and tears of joy we get at the end of case are the best part. Nothing else is close. There is nothing that compares to an emotional conclusion to a case and knowing that you have helped a family pick up the broken pieces and put their life back together.”

For these attorneys, they set the bar high on serving their clients, knowledge of their specialties and getting results from their diligent and tireless work. They are the difference in their clients’ lives.

### Family Matters

Mayo had the desire from a young age to help others and now has a “family-focused” firm involving criminal defense, family law and estate planning. He also focuses on administrative law matters for government employees, police officers in disciplinary hearings and civil practice that addresses landlord tenant issues, personal injury, and employment law matters.

Wills and estate planning are a fundamental component to a family’s future. Mayo says, “Many people forgo professional advice because they are lured by the lower costs and believe the online forms or ‘wills in a box’ will be just as effective as one created by an attorney. The documents you create with these do-it yourself estate planning services may look good and have impressive language; but if they don’t work for your unique circumstances, they are completely worthless.”

If divorce is in the cards, good representation is not only key for adults, but what parent doesn’t want to minimize the burden on their children; something Neisler is often mediating. “I am always happy to see two parents putting aside their own differences to agree on what is best for their children. Resolving disputes in family law matters quickly and amicably reduces the likelihood of further legal action and co-parenting disputes,” she says.

Rocky McElhaney knows the hardship faced when a catastrophic event occurs. When he was sixteen, his father suffered debilitating injuries from a fall on the job. When medical benefits and compensation were denied, it affected the entire family. McElhaney explains, “I saw firsthand how injuries impact a family and cause uncontrollable stress and strife. I saw worry on my Dad’s face. Bills went unpaid. We lost our home. Then, Dad got a lawyer and things got better. I knew at that moment that I wanted to be a lawyer, too, to help people when times were bad and when insurance companies made them worse – just like that lawyer helped my family. In other words, fighting for people is not just a job for me. It is my life’s work.”

McElhaney and his team take particular pride in helping the parents of children who have suffered injuries, such as those sustained from auto accidents, pools, at daycare or from birth. They work with families to develop a comprehensive plan for the future, accounting for medical visits, rehabilitation, surgery, and future complication that may result from the injury. A child’s future is especially important to the McElhaney firm.

### Experience and Expertise

Hiring legal counsel means finding the expertise, a network of professionals and the emotional support needed because most cannot go it alone.

Mayo holds both a law degree and counseling degree, as well as “practical experience.” “Having been a police officer, detective, and instructor for a large police department, I know the ins and outs of the justice system, and how it truly operates. He adds, “ I saw the need for effective legal representation for those accused of a crime, or experiencing personal crisis in their lives. There are so many facets as to why someone is being faced with an arrest, or going through a divorce, that I realized that individuals in crisis not only need an attorney to represent them as to their legal issues; but an attorney that truly cares about their situation, and can counsel them through the storm.”

Neisler says, “I was blessed to have started my legal career working for a very talented trial lawyer who was my mentor and who gave me the opportunity to spend a lot of time in the courtroom learning how to properly conduct myself in court and effectively argue my clients’ cases in court.” As a trial attorney, Rocky McElhaney knows, “Injured folks without a lawyer in their corner are playing a game that they do not know the rules to. Insurance adjusters are trained monthly on how to save money on the file to pad the bottom line. People need someone to fight for them.” He adds, “That’s all we do. We fight for you.”



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