

# SEARCY DENNEY SCAROLA BARNHART & SHIPLEY

# OF COUNSEL

A report  
to clients  
and attorneys.

VOLUME 07  
NUMBER 3

## \$25.8 MILLION VERDICT AGAINST WALGREENS IN PRESCRIPTION ERROR

**Mistake of 10 mg dose instead of 1 mg dose results in massive cerebral hemorrhage in woman fighting breast cancer.**

In the summer of 2002, Beth Hippely, age 42, mother of four, was diagnosed with cancer in her right breast. Fortunately, the detection was early enough that with the tremendous strides made in the treatment of breast cancer, her prognosis was very favorable. Beth looked forward to a full life expectancy provided that she followed her doctor's treatment regimen which included chemotherapy, radiation, and a drug called Tamoxifen. On September 20, 2002, after undergoing three cycles of chemotherapy, Beth Hippely had her prescription for a blood thinner known as Warfarin (generic Coumadin), filled once again at her local Walgreens Pharmacy. Coumadin is a very dangerous and potentially lethal medication if given in the wrong dose. However, unbeknownst



**Beth Hippely in her hospital room.**

to Beth or her family, instead of being given 1 milligram pills as prescribed by her doctor, Beth was given 10 milligram pills.

On October 13, 2002, after mistakenly taking the 10 milligram pills for three weeks, Beth Hippely suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage and was rushed to Lakewood Regional Medical Center for an emergency craniotomy. Sadly, Beth slipped into a comatose state, and her future looked very bleak. *(Continued on page nine.)*

## FLORIDA SETTLES \$10 MILLION CHILD ABUSE CASE

**Dept. of Children and Families knew about on-going 'catastrophically destructive' abuse to three children in their care.**

The adoptive parents of three adolescent boys who were sexually abused in one foster home and cruelly disciplined in another, reached a compromise settlement with the Florida Department of Children and Families for \$10 million on October 22, 2007, the eve before a two-day Summary Jury trial was to begin in West Palm Beach.

A specially-set, two-month trial was to start on November 5, 2007 before Palm Beach Circuit Judge Edward Fine.

"I've been trying cases against the state of Florida for 23 years, and this is the first time that I have seen DCF try to settle a meritorious case," said SDSBS attorney Lance Block, who with Tallahassee attorney Karen Gievers, represented the boys and their adoptive parents. "Had this case been against a private entity, the settlement would have been for many millions more. But this case was against the government *(Continued on page three.)*



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**\$2.7 Million  
Settlement:  
PERSONAL INJURY-  
WRONGFUL DEATH**

## INTERSTATE HIGHWAY CRASH RESULTS IN PERMANENT INJURIES

**Slow-moving tractor-trailer pulls into fast-moving highway traffic with no warning signals.**

Interstate 95 is a major traffic corridor running from south Florida all the way north to Maine. Because of the large number of vehicles constantly traveling I-95, and the dangerous mix of large and small, commercial and private vehicles, any momentary failure of a driver to exercise safe judgment can suddenly result in a catastrophic accident. On April 15, 2005, a 70-foot long, flatbed tractor-trailer was heading south on I-95 near West Palm Beach, Florida. The driver was hauling a heavy load of cement for his employer, a west coast drilling company. The truck began overheating, as it had done on several other occasions, and even though an exit was only 1/4 mile away, the driver decided to pull the truck off of the interstate into a construction area's emergency parking lane. After the driver resolved the problems with his truck, he climbed back into the cab and began pulling out of his temporary parking area and back into the traffic lanes of the interstate.

John Doe, age 56, was also driving southbound on I-95 near West Palm Beach along with other traffic traveling the usual high speeds of an interstate highway. The truck's driver pulled into the right-hand lane of the interstate traveling at a speed at or below 20 miles per hour. He had no flashing lights or other warning for drivers speeding toward him from the rear. The driver's actions had effectively created

a slow-speed blockade in the middle of a high-speed lane. John Doe could not avoid the tractor-trailer and crashed into the rear of the truck. John was severely injured in the collision. He was rushed, near death, to a nearby hospital for emergency treatment. He spent three months in the hospital, half of that time in a coma. The injuries he suffered caused permanent brain damage and eventually John was declared functionally and totally disabled. He was no longer able to work. He had incurred substantial medical expenses for treatment and rehabilitation at the hospital, and faces even more costly medical care in the future.

In February 2006, John Doe asked SDSBS attorney David Kelley to represent him in a personal injury action against the driver and the drilling company. In August 2007, the parties reached a settlement of \$2.7 million. ■



OF  
COUNSEL

NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME 07 NUMBER 3

NOTE: The accounts of recent trials, verdicts and settlements contained in this newsletter are intended to illustrate the experience of the firm in a variety of litigation areas. Each case is unique, and the results in one case do not necessarily indicate the quality or value of any other case. Omitting clients' names and/or defendants' names are the result of requests for anonymity.





# ATTORNEY CHRIS SEARCY'S PASSION FOR JUSTICE ACHIEVES \$100 MILLION IN JURY TRIAL VERDICTS FOR FOUR SDSBS CLIENTS IN 2007

This year Searcy Denney partner Chris Searcy accomplished a rare feat: a total of more than \$100 million in jury verdicts for four different client families whose lives have been devastated.

But for Searcy, winning these verdicts was no different from the impassioned pursuit of justice he has practiced his entire career as a trial lawyer. For more than 30 years, he has spoken up for those who can't speak for themselves, battling to protect the rights of innocent victims.

"Every day, every trial, is special, because every client is special," says Searcy. "It's not just about the money, although all of these families face a lifetime of astronomical medical bills and other financial burdens. It's also about protecting every citizen's constitutional right to seek justice under the law."

Searcy has earned a reputation as a champion of the underdog, representing innocent victims killed or injured by the negligence of others. But he worries that in the future there may be limited recourse for families whose lives have been turned upside down by inattentive drivers, unscrupulous doctors, or corporations that value profit

over public safety. "As conservatives scramble to ban so-called 'frivolous' litigation and legislators put caps on recoveries that victims genuinely need and deserve, our civil justice system is seriously threatened," he warns.

Searcy's four cases, in which judgments totaled \$101.7 million, illustrate in very human terms the intrinsic value of our civil justice system. The cases couldn't be more different. And yet, there are several common threads: the reluctance of wrongdoers to accept responsibility, even in the face of solid factual evidence; the length of litigation – in one case, a decade; and, on the other hand, the brevity of jury deliberation, an average of just three hours.

"What is most striking about these cases," says Searcy, "is that they demonstrate the brilliance of our trial-by-

jury system. A jury of peers is amazing in its ability to cut to the chase. CEOs and highly-paid corporate attorneys have spent years devising strategies to obscure the facts. Yet, in all four cases, it took a handful of common sense people just a few hours to find justice."

Three of the Searcy clients were families who filed claims against the medical community on behalf of a loved one. In February, parents of little Aaron Edwards were awarded a judgment of \$30.8 million against Lee

Memorial Health System, which, a jury found, caused preventable lifelong crippling brain injury. According to the lawsuit, Lee Memorial Health System failed to adhere to its own policies and procedures to protect Aaron's mother while administering the drug pitocin to induce labor.

The lawsuit over Aaron's brain damage was filed shortly after he was born, in September 1997. However, it dragged on for a decade because of what Searcy calls "the culture of no accountability to the patient" fostered by Lee Memorial. Unfortunately for Aaron's parents, the case will drag on still longer due to appeals

in the case and the possibility of having to go through a claims bill process against Lee Memorial. Lee Memorial maintains it is a special taxing district of the state of Florida, which requires legislature approval of the claim. The Legislature has the option of awarding an amount different from the jury's decision.

In yet another affirmation of Searcy's faith in the civil justice system, in July a Tampa jury awarded \$23.5 million to a Gainesville couple who sued University of South Florida geneticists who failed to identify in their first child severe hereditary disorders that then recurred in their second child.

Amara and Daniel Estrada's son Aiden was born in 2002 with abnormalities that included a cleft palate, abnormally placed urethral opening, undescended testicles,



**Chris Searcy**

***Photos of some of  
Chris Searcy's clients.***

and decreased amniotic fluid. They told a USF geneticist they would not consider a second child if the defects were genetic. They were told no genetic disorder was indicated, and to expect a normal pregnancy.

When the Estradas' second son, Caleb, was born in 2004 with similar multiple birth defects, it left them with two severely-disabled special needs children, now both of whom would require millions of dollars of future care. It took a jury only three hours to render the verdict, but, says Searcy, it will take the Estradas a lifetime of sacrifice to care for their children. "The emotional pain and financial burden caused by failure to identify an obvious genetic disorder could easily have been avoided by a proper medical diagnosis."

In a third Searcy case, Beth Hippely's hope of surviving breast cancer was tragically complicated when a Walgreens pharmacist misfilled her prescription for Warfarin, a blood-thinning medication.

Advising that the 42-year-old mother of three had an 88% chance of survival, doctors prescribed chemotherapy and a one milligram dose of Warfarin. But when Hippely took the prescription to be filled, Walgreens gave her a dosage ten times the strength prescribed. This overdose caused excessive bleeding inside her brain, resulting in permanent and profound brain injury and forcing Hippely to stop chemotherapy treatments. Ultimately, she suffered a massive stroke and died.



Searcy's fourth major trial in 2007 resulted in a jury award of \$21.6 million to the family of a woman killed by an inattentive motorist using a cell phone. In 2004, wife and mother Lesley Beers was driving to work in rush hour on the Sawgrass Expressway, as she always did. In a flash, Beers's car was struck in the rear by another driver who, cell phone records confirmed, was distracted by a cell phone call and failed to stop. As a result of being rear-ended, Beers' vehicle was pushed across the median and was struck again by two more oncoming cars. She died at the scene.

"Tragically, it has become increasingly commonplace for drivers to focus on their cell phone conversations rather than watch the road," says Searcy. "The driver who rear-ended Lesley Beers could have prevented this accident. Stephen Beers would still have a wife, and Olivia and Zachary would still have a mother. This grave negligence was obvious to the jury, which took less than two hours to deliberate."

For Chris Searcy, the lasting value of these verdicts is proof that our civil justice system works for everyone. He is as passionate about the system's defense as he is about his pursuit of justice for his clients. "What better confirmation could we have of the wisdom of our Founding Fathers?" he muses. "They embedded in our Constitution the right of all citizens to seek recourse from the courts, and to have issues tried by a jury of peers. This has worked for more than 200 years; it is a sacred trust that we cannot betray." ■

*"Every day, every trial, is special, because every client is special...it's not just about the money...it's also about protecting every citizen's constitutional right to seek justice under the law."*

*- - Chris Searcy*

The pharmacist responsible for verifying Hippely's prescription was not made aware of the error until three years later when a lawsuit was filed. It took a jury just slightly more than three hours to find Walgreens responsible and award a judgment of \$25.8 million. Searcy cites this case as just one more example of a corporate carelessness and greed. "Walgreens' slogan is 'The Pharmacy America Trusts,' but when Beth Hippely trusted them, she died," says Searcy. "While no amount of money can adequately compensate the Hippely family for the untimely death of a wife and mother, this verdict serves notice on corporate America that putting profit over safety will not be tolerated."

**Over  
\$3 Million  
Settlement:  
BREACH OF CONTRACT**

## SOFTWARE ENTREPRENEUR SETTLES BREACH OF CONTRACT SUIT AGAINST TECH COMPANY

**The delay in effecting the registration resulted in substantial losses to Mr. Vasa.**

**H**ark Vasa is a true American success story. An electrical engineer from Mumbai, India, Mr. Vasa immigrated to the United States in 1967, continued his education, and became a U.S. citizen.

In 1983, he bought a majority interest in Pacific Decision Sciences Corp., a small California software company nearing bankruptcy. With decades of hard work and determination, Mr. Vasa, as President and CEO, turned PDSC into a company with \$10 million in annual revenue, over \$3 million in annual profits and 75 employees worldwide.

Mr. Vasa decided that to enable PDSC to grow at a faster pace and expand business globally, it needed to team up with a larger company. A Texas investment banking firm specializing in mergers and acquisitions was hired to find a merger partner. Many companies were interested in acquiring PDSC.

In October 2000, PDSC entered into a merger agreement with Applied Digital Solutions, a Florida-based information technology corporation. ADS had acquired about fifty other companies in the preceding four years, often using its publicly-traded common stock to pay part of the acquisition price.

The merger agreement provided for ADS to acquire PDSC in exchange for ADS common stock, split among Mr. Vasa and the other PDSC shareholders. The agreement required ADS to register these shares with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which would allow the stock to be sold in the open market.

ADS did not comply with its contractual obligations to use its best efforts to effect the registration as expeditiously as possible. The delay in effecting the registration resulted in substantial losses to Mr. Vasa, as the share price plummeted in the interim.

Mr. Vasa hired Paul Traina of Engstrom, Lipscomb, and Lack in Los Angeles to pursue his breach of contract action. Since the contract called for litigation to be undertaken in Palm Beach County, Mr. Traina sought the assistance of SDSBS attorneys Jack Scarola and Pat Quinlan. Working together on both coasts, this team of litigators was within two weeks of trial when they settled the case at mediation for over \$3 million. In addition, Mr. Vasa has been authorized to operate a new business venture as an affiliate of Applied Digital Solutions. ■



## SPEAKING EVENTS



**Chris Searcy**  
spoke on "Edwards vs. Lee

Memorial Hospital Verdict" at the Florida Trial Practice Seminar XII, held Oct. 21st. The seminar, hosted by attorneys Fred Weisman and Sidney M. Cornrich of Cleveland, Ohio, was held in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. ■



**Greg Barnhart**  
spoke at the  
Florida Justice

Association's fall convention held Nov. 2nd in Orlando. His subject for the General Session was Advanced Trial Skills, including strategies that win and strategies that lose. ■



**Harry Shevin**  
served as a panelist on two sessions

of the Palm Beach County Bench Bar Conference held on Oct. 12th. One session addressed the issues of Personal Injury. The other session addressed Trial Advocacy. In November, Mr. Shevin moderated and gave a presentation for the Palm Beach County Justice Association's conference on SCOPE (Strategies for Cross-Examining Opposing Professional Examiners). ■



# NEGLIGENT DELAY IN DIAGNOSIS RESULTS IN DEATH FROM EASILY TREATABLE FORM OF CANCER

**In spite of classic warning signs and known risk factors, the doctor delayed doing a biopsy for endometrial cancer.**

Steve and Sharon Diehl were married in August 1971. They had a unique and special relationship in which they were not only married, but spent each day and night together. They not only worked for the same company, but worked alongside each other every day, and shared lunch breaks together. They raised a family together, and over the 33½ years they were married they remained devoted to one another and to their family. Sharon was a successful and highly sought-after kitchen designer, with numerous national awards for her designs.

North Florida Women's Physicians had been Sharon's gynecologists for years. In March 2003, Sharon made an appointment to see Dr. Jean Cook at North Florida Women's Physicians in Gainesville, Florida, because of abnormal uterine bleeding. Sharon didn't know it - and Dr. Cook never told her - but the abnormal bleeding Sharon was experiencing was a textbook warning sign that endometrial cancer was present in her body. Sharon had multiple risk factors for endometrial cancer. She was over 50 years old, Caucasian, overweight, and had a history of irregular menstrual cycles. Following the examination, Dr. Cook assumed Sharon's abnormal uterine bleeding was caused by a minor, benign condition. Over the next three months, however, the doctor ordered two transvaginal ultrasound tests to be performed. Each test showed a thickening of the endometrium - yet another clue that Sharon had endometrial cancer. The doctor did not order an endometrial biopsy - a simple, safe, one-minute office test - which would have determined whether endometrial cancer was the cause of the bleeding. Six months later, in September

2003, Dr. Cook finally performed that simple, safe office test and diagnosed endometrial cancer. By that time, the cancer had spread to Sharon's right ovary and elsewhere in her body. After diagnosis, Sharon received treatment for the cancer at the University of Florida.

Endometrial carcinoma is the most common gynecologic cancer in the United States. American women have a 2.6% life-time risk of developing this cancer. Fortunately, because this common cancer declares its presence in a woman's body with abnormal uterine bleeding and is easily diagnosed with a simple, safe office test, it has

an exceptionally high cure rate; most patients are cured with surgery alone. The five-year survival rate for a localized occurrence of this cancer is 96%. For regional or metastatic occurrences, the five-year survival rates are 66% and 25%, respectively. Because her doctor failed to act on the classic warning sign and risk factors, Sharon was deprived of a prompt and accurate diagnosis, and that delay in diagnosis caused her wrong-

ful, tragic and preventable death. After a long and painful fight for life, Sharon died January 2, 2005, of metastatic endometrial cancer. She was only 53 years old.

Sharon is survived by husband Steve, son Brett, now 18 years old, daughter Heather Diehl Talton, and Heather's four-year-old twin sons - Sharon and Steve's only grandchildren. Brett was only 15 when his mother died. In the months before she died, Sharon talked to Brett about the importance of applying himself, and doing well by doing his best with the talents he had. Brett was a B and C student before his mother became ill. After his mother died, Brett has honored his mother by earning an A in every class he has taken. He is in his freshman year of college in the pre-med program, and is studying to be a doctor.

*(Continued on page ten.)*



**Sharon and Steve Diehl and their twin grandsons.**



## Chris Searcy named one of 'top lawyers' by Florida Trend's 'Legal Elite 2007'.

**Chris Searcy** has been named by *Florida Trend's* "Legal Elite 2007" as one of "the top 868 lawyers who have earned the trust and confidence of those who know their work the best." *Florida Trend*, a website for Florida's business community, establishes the prestigious list by balloting 59,481 Florida Bar members who practice in the state. Attorneys were asked to name lawyers whom they hold in highest regard, with whom they have worked or would have recommended to others. Following balloting, a panel of the 2006 *Legal Elite* attorneys, representing different practice areas in cities across the state, reviewed the selection process and the list of finalists. ■



## Emilio Diamantis elected President of The Guatemalan-Mayan Center for 2008

SDSBS paralegal **Emilio Diamantis** was elected president of The Guatemalan-Mayan Center for 2008. Mr. Diamantis was one of the original founders of this outreach program with offices in Palm Beach County. For the past 15 years, the Center has provided pre-natal and postnatal care for the Guatemalan-Mayan community in the county. The Center also provides preschool and after-school programs for children, and numerous other services that assist the members of this underserved community. ■

## ACCOLADES



**Chris Searcy**



**Jack Scarola**



**Greg Barnhart**



**John Shipley**



**Lance Block**



**Chris Speed**



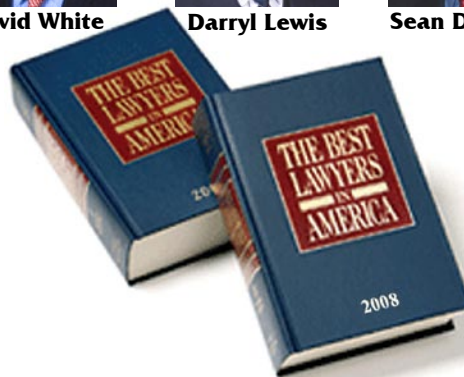
**David White**



**Darryl Lewis**



**Sean Domnick**



## Nine SDSBS attorneys selected 'The Best Lawyers in America' in 2008 edition

**Chris Searcy, Jack Scarola, Greg Barnhart, John Shipley, Lance Block, Chris Speed, David White, Darryl Lewis, and Sean Domnick** were selected for the 2008 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*. This edition marks the 21st consecutive year that Chris Searcy and Chris Speed have been listed in the publication. Greg Barnhart has been listed for the past 11 years. *Best Lawyers* is regarded as the definitive guide to legal excellence. Attorneys are selected based on an exhaustive and rigorous peer-review survey, with more than 25,000 leading attorneys casting almost two million votes on the legal abilities of other lawyers within their specialties. Because lawyers are not required or permitted to pay a fee to be listed, inclusion in *Best Lawyers* is a singular honor. ■



## **\$25.8 million verdict against Walgreens in prescription error.**

*(Continued from page one.)*

Her family was told to consider making plans regarding the life supporting measures that were being used to sustain Beth's life. Beth eventually progressed to what is known as a "locked-in" state. It is a horrendous neurological state where a person is aware of their surroundings, but has little or no means of communication. Eventually, Beth was able to communicate by using eye movements only. She blinked once for "yes" and twice for "no."

Unfortunately, while Beth heroically fought to overcome her plight, she was never able to complete her life-saving chemotherapy protocol... the breast cancer returned and spread throughout her body.

Beth Hippely required tracheal intubation/breathing tube as well as a feeding tube for over ten months. She also underwent extensive treatment and painful rehabilitation during her hospitalizations and treatment at nursing homes. Ultimately, Beth was transferred to the Florida Institute for Neurological Rehabilitation (FINR) in Wauchula, where she progressed somewhat. She attempted to relearn how to eat, walk, and talk. Sadly, the need for the use of the breathing tube left Beth's vocal cord nerves impaired, and she spoke with great difficulty. This nightmare took its toll on not only Beth but also her husband Deane and Beth's son, Randy, who tried their hardest to make the household function for Beth and Deane's daughters, Kerrienne and Nellie. They learned to accept the dramatic changes in Beth resulting from her massive brain injury and appreciate what they had in Beth. Beth was eventually able to have short weekend visits at home with her family, after they were trained to manage her health care needs. The Hippely family's goal was to get Beth home for good so they could be a complete family again. Unfortunately, they did not have the enormous financial resources that it would take to hire appropriate health care nurses in order to safely bring Beth home on a permanent basis.

Beth and Deane Hippely and the children got to share their last Christmas together in 2006. Unfortunately, while Beth heroically fought to overcome her plight, she was never able to complete her life-saving chemotherapy protocol. Sadly, after this family's long fight to rehabilitate and bring home their beloved mother and wife, the breast cancer returned and spread throughout her body. Beth died on Jan. 8, 2007. Not only had Beth been robbed of the tools to fight cancer, but she had been subjected to some of the most taxing stresses both physically and emotionally. This family, who had struggled through tremendous challenges, had their hearts broken once again.



**Beth and Deane Hippely**

Amazingly, Walgreens, self-proclaimed as "*The Pharmacy America Trusts*," refused to take full responsibility for this tragedy. Instead they blamed others, including Beth's physicians, and even Beth herself, for failing to catch their error! SDSBS attorneys Chris Searcy and Karen Terry left no stone unturned. They discovered that workload problems had been a significant reason for the misfill. It was also discovered that the pharmacy technician that input the prescription was a high school student who had previously worked at a local movie theatre.

The Hippely case was passionately pursued by attorneys Chris Searcy and Karen Terry. On August 17, 2007, a Polk County jury finally delivered to Deane Hippely and Beth's children, Randy, Kerrienne, and Nellie, a long-awaited justice. A verdict was rendered in favor of the plaintiffs against Walgreens for just over \$25.8 million. Tragically, Beth was not physically in court to see her fight through. Even at trial, Walgreens failed to accept responsibility for Beth's death.

Walgreens' delays and failure to accept full responsibility did not stop the march to justice against the corporate giant. Deane Hippely promised his wife that he would see this fight through so that other consumers would be protected. This case, along with others, was featured on ABC's *20/20* and in many news articles across the country. This verdict has created a healthy and needed dialogue surrounding safety issues including the use of unlicensed pharmacy technicians, industry training standards, error reporting, and the safe volume of prescriptions to be handled. The challenges of relying on government oversight, or self-policing by the industry, are clearly insurmountable. It takes courageous plaintiffs, like the Hippelys, to fight the hard fight, not only for themselves, but for all those they hope and pray will never have to endure the same pain. ■

**\$25.8 Million Verdict:**  
**MEDICAL MALPRACTICE**

**Brian Quinlan with  
Dr. Melissa Singer.**

## **Negligent delay in diagnosis results in death from easily treatable form of cancer**

**(Continued from page seven.)**

Steve, now 59 years of age, works the same job he worked alongside his wife for so many years. He is alone, without his life's partner, for the first time since he was a sailor in the United States Navy. Every day at work is a reminder of Sharon's absence. He works 70 hours a week. He has difficulty sleeping more than a few hours and often returns to his office as early as 3:00 a.m.

After Sharon's death, the family asked SDSBS to represent them in an action charging North Florida Women's Physicians and Dr. Cook with negligent delay in diagnosis of Sharon's endometrial cancer, which deprived Sharon of treatment when it would have saved her life. SDSBS attorneys Jim Gustafson and Bill Norton took the case to trial, and on October 12, 2007, a Gainesville, Florida jury returned a verdict in favor of Sharon's family and awarded \$2.1 million in damages. "We are grateful that the jury's verdict acknowledged this family's loss," said Mr. Gustafson, "but it won't change the fact that Sharon Diehl would be alive today had she not been diagnosed so late." ■



**Steve and Sharon Diehl in the 1970's.**

## **TAKING... Time to Care**

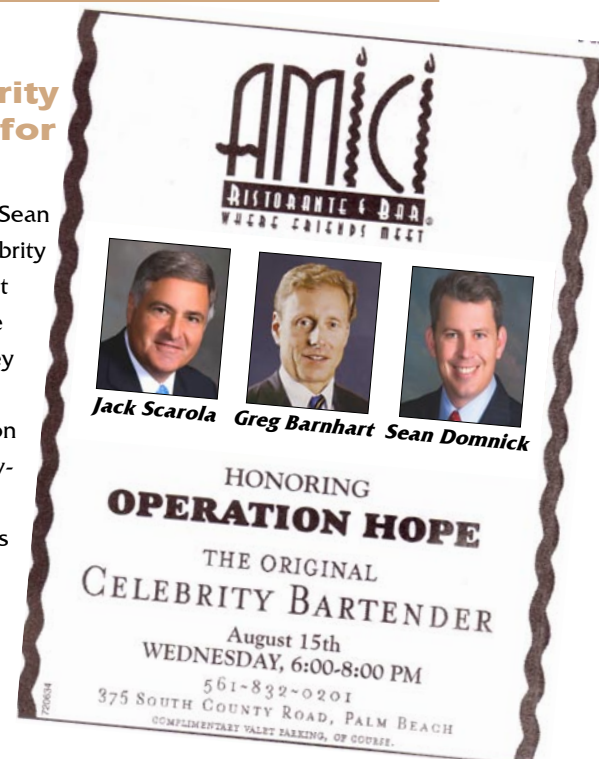


### **Brian Quinlan named Boy of the Year by national Leukemia & Lymphoma Society**

Brian Quinlan, son of SDSBS attorney Patrick Quinlan, was selected Boy of the Year for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's 2007 national Man & Woman of the Year fundraising drive. The candidates compete on the basis of their ability to raise funds to help the Society combat leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma, and improve the quality of life for patients and their families. Candidates run in honor of the Boy and Girl of the Year who are young, local, blood cancer survivors. Brian provided inspiration and motivation for the candidates during the campaign. Dr. Melissa Singer of West Palm Beach was named Woman of the Year for the national Society. Her own fundraising efforts as a candidate broke all national records for the Society. Brian, now seven years old, was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL) in September 2004. He has just successfully completed three years of chemotherapy treatments. Brian lives in West Palm Beach with his parents, Patrick and Nancy, and his brother Brendan. ■

### **Firm members participate in Celebrity Bartending event for Operation Hope**

Jack Scarola, Greg Barnhart, and Sean Domnick participated in the Celebrity Bartending fundraiser held August 15, 2007, at the Amici Ristorante & Bar in Palm Beach, Florida. They helped raise over \$2,000 in tips and other donations for Operation Hope, a charity dedicated to serving the homeless in Palm Beach County. Operation Hope provides temporary housing and essential support services for the homeless and assists them in becoming productive, self-supporting members of the community. ■







**Above: Governor Crist speaks at the opening of the Commission on Disabilities.**



**Left: the Commission members, including SDSBS attorney Lance Block, 4th from left on the dais.**

## SDSBS attorney Lance Block chairs Governor's Commission on Disabilities in Tallahassee

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities, a 19-member, statewide commission appointed by Florida Governor Charlie Crist, conducted its organizational meetings in the Florida Senate Office Building in Tallahassee on October 15 and 16, 2007. The commission members include representatives from ten state agencies and Florida's disabled community. SDSBS attorney Lance Block chairs the commission. At the initial organizational meeting, the commission listened to a number of concerns from the public. When asked for his biggest barrier, one attendee who is blind stated, "Transportation, without a doubt." The commission will meet quarterly and provide a report to the governor by July 1, 2008, with recommendations concerning education, transportation, employment, and independent living for Florida's more than three million persons with disabilities. ■



**L-r: Tim Frith, Jimmy Russakis, Tom DeRita, Greg Barnhart, Steven Barnette, Vernon Smith and Nicolas Hemes**

## SDSBS attends awards luncheon to support FHP Advisory Council

Attorney Greg Barnhart and paralegal Dave Gilmore presented awards on behalf of the Florida Highway Patrol Advisory Council at a luncheon hosted by the Council on October 19, 2007, at the West Palm Beach Marriott Hotel. The luncheon recognized the services of the FHP in protecting the citizens of Florida, and, in particular, the efforts of FHP Troop L. The Council is an organization comprised of business, professional, and community leaders throughout the state. The Council established a memorial fund to honor FHP troopers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Additionally, the Council assists the FHP in other areas such as legislation, special projects, and resource support to enable FHP to improve public safety and the quality of service. Chris Searcy is a member of the Council. ■



IN THIS INCREASINGLY  
TURBULENT WORLD,  
WE ARE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL  
TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS  
WHO HAVE DEDICATED THEIR CAREERS,  
AND LIVES,  
TO PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES.

WE ARE PROUD TO HONOR  
THEIR DILIGENCE, COURAGE,  
AND SACRIFICE  
FOR THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE FOR ALL.



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