



# Karen Terry

## Searcy Denney Scarola Barnhart & Shipley

By Sue Reddy Silverman

**D**inner at Karen E. Terry's childhood home was an epic battle of debates. With a persuasive attorney father and a paralegal mother, she learned at a young age that a legal background may give her the voice to win at their dinner table. She had no choice, but to follow her older sister to law school and become a lawyer. And once she did, she dove right in.

She graduated, cum laude, from Duke University, earned her master's degree at the University of Florida and graduated with her Juris Doctor from the University of Florida College of Law. During her legal studies, she specialized on the First Amendment and telecommunications law. After college, she clerked for former Chief Judge Walter Colbath before joining private practice.

"I am in a unique practice area. All I do, 100 percent of the time, is help catastrophically injured folks who are trying to overcome tragedies," Terry said. "It is my sole focus."

Terry has been practicing personal injury law at Searcy Denney Scarola Barnhart & Shipley in West Palm Beach for the past 18 years. "While it's challenging to represent those who have been traumatized over a devastating loss, it has really opened my eyes to accepting real life tragedy," Terry said. "It has made me a much more kind and patient person as well as made me learn to live each day to the fullest and not take anything for granted."

"When I started out, my practice focused on representing the elderly who suffered abuse at the hands of nursing homes and assisted living facilities," she continued. "I grew up volunteering at a nursing home so the elderly hold a special place in my heart. This area of the law is a special niche with its own statute that pertains to it and its own rules. With more and more people moving to Florida, I predict that unfortunately many more of them will be the subject of nursing home abuse. I am honored to continue to fight their battles and obtain justice for them. After all, we will all be elderly one day."

While Terry fights for justice under the law, her softer side prevails. The best compliment she's ever received is a heartfelt note of thanks from her clients. "There is nothing better than a simple thank you note," she said. "I've saved every one I've ever received. I am old fashioned that way."

What would Terry like to see in the future? "I would like the Florida Supreme Court to rule that caps on medical malpractice cases are unconstitutional," she said. "It isn't fair to those who have been maimed at the hands of health care professionals to have caps placed on their pain and suffering, disfigurement, and loss of the capacity for the enjoyment of life, especially babies and young children who have a long life to live. There are no caps on these types of damages in other areas of the law, like automobile negligence. It just shows how powerful the medical lobby is."

When asked what advice she would give other attorneys wishing to follow in her steps, she said, "I say that while being an advocate is important, being kind and ethical is much more important. You will be remembered and respected by opposing counsel and the judiciary for that much more than anything else."

When Terry is not representing the harmed, she spends time with family and stays physically and mentally fit running and practicing yoga. She also enjoys her new golden retriever puppy, Elsie.

### **Searcy Denney Scarola Barnhart & Shipley**

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