

Of Counsel

A REPORT TO CLIENTS & ATTORNEYS VOLUME 20, NUMBER 2



\$6 million settlement for van passenger severely injured in hit-and-run crash

In June 2019, Margaret Smith was traveling as a passenger in a van operated by Palm Tran Connection, a Palm Beach County, Florida, paratransit service that provides transportation for disabled residents and visitors to the county. The van was struck on Interstate 95 by a hit-and-run driver, and Ms. Smith was severely injured. Ms. Smith's family contacted SDSBS attorney **Mara Hatfield** seeking help for medical and support expenses facing Ms. Smith as a result of her injuries. After months of negotiation and pre-suit disclosure, the insurance carriers for the Palm Tran Connection vendors offered the limits of the underinsured motorist policies. The recovery totaled \$6 million and was put into an annuity and a Special-Needs Trust. Shortly after settlement was reached, Ms. Smith succumbed to her injuries. With continued efforts on behalf of Ms. Smith, Ms. Hatfield was able to ensure that the recovery would be distributed directly to her survivors as a lasting legacy. ♦

IN
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ISSUE:

SDSBS listed in
Top 50/100 Verdicts
in Florida

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Two SDSBS cases listed in
Courtroom View Network's
"Top 10 Medical Malpractice Cases"

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Chris Searcy



Karen Terry



Matt Schwencke



Andrea Lewis

\$15+ million settlement in product liability and medical negligence case.

John Doe (not his real name) became brain injured as a result of a product liability incident and medical negligence. He died after a very long and hard-fought battle to survive. His wife and children asked SDSBS attorneys **Chris Searcy, Karen Terry, Matthew Schwencke, and Andrea Lewis** to represent the family in a legal action to obtain accountability for the loss of their husband and father. After close to nine years of fighting for justice, on the eve of trial the SDSBS attorneys were able to obtain a confidential settlement of over \$15 million. ♦

\$6 million claims bill signed into law to help provide medical care and some stability

On June 9, 2020, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law a \$6 million claims bill that will help to provide medical care and some stability to Dontrell Stephens. In 2013, Mr. Stephens was shot in the back by a Palm Beach County Deputy Sheriff severing Mr. Stephens' spinal cord and leaving him permanently paralyzed from the waist down. The shooting occurred after Mr. Stephens was stopped for allegedly causing a truck to slow down when Mr. Stephens crossed the street on his bicycle. The deputy claimed that he thought Mr. Stephens was holding a gun in his hand and that he had shot in self-defense, but the deputy's dash-cam video showed Mr. Stephens holding a clearly visible cell phone the entire time. Although the Palm Beach County State Attorneys Office found the shooting to be justified, a federal jury ruled in 2016 that the deputy's use of force was unjustified and awarded Mr. Stephens \$22.5 million.

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& SHIPLEY PA**
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