

suburbanlife

BEST *of the*
BEST
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People of
the year,
a new you
for 2026

Stewart Ryan, a partner
with **Laffey Bucci D'Andrea
Reich & Ryan**, builds
meaningful connections
with clients as he helps
them recover from
traumatizing abuse.

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For many attorneys, the relationship with a client ends as soon as the case draws to a conclusion. It's not necessarily that they don't *want* to stay in touch, but the nature of the beast requires them to move on to the next matter on the docket and assist the next person in need.

That's not the case for Stewart Ryan, who is known across the country and even internationally as an advocate for victims of sexual and physical abuse. The bond that he forms with each client as he helps them find closure to a horrific experience is not soon forgotten. In fact, nothing in his professional career gives him more fulfillment than hearing from past clients who are now attending college, becoming inspired to pursue new careers, or getting married and having children.

"Getting to share in all of those great life milestones is really tremendous," Ryan says. "At first, a lot of people are terrified to even say anything about what happened to them, and they experience a lot of dark days, not knowing whether they're going to get through or not. To be able to help someone stand up and stand on their own at the end of a case and then throughout the rest of their life is really powerful."



A BOND THAT NEVER BREAKS

by MATT COSENTINO
PHOTOS BY
ALISON DUNLAP

STEWART RYAN, A PARTNER WITH **LAFFEY BUCCI D'ANDREA REICH & RYAN**, BUILDS MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH CLIENTS AS HE HELPS THEM RECOVER FROM TRAUMATIZING ABUSE.

Since its founding in 2009, Laffey Bucci D'Andrea Reich & Ryan has been known as a firm that builds meaningful connections with all of its clients, whether a victim of abuse, a worker who suffered a serious injury on the job, or someone hurt in a car accident. Founding partners Jeffrey F. Laffey and Paul Bucci have established a culture in which expertise in various practice areas goes hand in hand with compassion and a willingness to go above and beyond in service to a positive outcome.

Ryan joined the firm in 2018 after six years as a prosecutor in the Montgomery

changed the trajectory of my career."

As a prosecutor, he worked on high-profile cases, including the Bill Cosby trial, to seek justice for victims of abuse. In his current role, he represents plaintiffs who were victimized in institutional settings in civil trials. The firm's stellar reputation, along with relationships with other lawyers nationwide, has resulted in clients from across the country seeking the firm's assistance.

Ryan sees two major differences between being a prosecutor and a plaintiff's attorney.

I am an advocate, I'm their lawyer, and I take on the form of a counselor in many ways, whether that's working through specific trauma issues or general life issues. The closeness that you can achieve is one of the most fulfilling parts of the job."

Ryan relishes the underdog role that is common throughout the firm's work. He credits the entire team at Laffey Bucci D'Andrea Reich & Ryan for supporting him in cases against major entities with upper-crust legal teams. When the legal team is able to produce a settlement or a favorable jury verdict, the financial compensation can help clients secure their futures and seek the resources they need to recover and rebuild their lives.

But those aren't the only rewards.

"Every time someone in their position stands up, speaks out, and is willing to confront institutions where abuse occurs, they are making that community and even other communities safer as a result," Ryan says. "We talk about nonmonetary conditions like changing policies, changing behavior in these institutional settings, and having the opportunity to protect others in the future who they may never meet or know."

Ryan furthers that mission outside of the office. As a frequent guest speaker on the topics of abuse and a teacher of a course at Villanova Law, he hopes to inspire future attorneys to pursue a similar path.

"This is not a subject that people like thinking about or talking about, but it's really, really important that as a society,

we do think and talk about these issues," he says. "I see it as a responsibility and an obligation to be an advocate for the rights of all survivors, and to make sure also that parents are aware of what signs there might be that abuse is occurring. Children especially are not always going to speak up on their own, so it takes a community to recognize those signs to put a stop to abuse if it's occurring." ■



County District Attorney's Office. It was there that he first discovered his passion for working with victims of sexual and physical abuse. He now specializes in cases involving sexual assault, hazing, and human trafficking.

"When I was an intern at the DA's Office, I worked on a case involving a Catholic school teacher who abused one child, and then more children came out," he recalls. "I saw the way that the prosecutor I worked for helped the family, especially the kids, and helped the community do a 180 from supporting the abuser to supporting the kids as the case moved along. I grew up in Catholic schools, and that experience hit home with me. I didn't personally experience anything like that, but to see it unfold in the context of that prosecution

"Here, you are really focusing on institutional failures," he says. "Whether it's businesses, schools, churches, you name it—what were they doing or not doing that allowed the abuse to occur? Were they aware of prior incidents involving the abuser that they mishandled or tried to cover up? Did they have supervision and monitoring in place to make sure that abuse doesn't happen?"

"Also," he continues, "something I didn't expect in this line of work was the relationship that you build with the client. As a prosecutor, you don't have a client; you represent everyone in the community. Obviously, you develop close working relationships with the victims in those cases, but there is a little bit of space. My work now is totally different; that space has disappeared.

➔ Laffey Bucci D'Andrea Reich & Ryan

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