

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY EDITION | PREMIERE 2013

# ATTORNEY AT LAW

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MAGAZINE®

## Features:

**Bob Brogan**  
Attorney of the Month

**The Law Offices of Gina Mendola Longarzo**  
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# Bob Brogan

## Dedicated to Helping People through Difficult Times

by Vicki Hogue-Davies

**W**hen asked what he enjoys most about working in elder law and special needs planning, Bob Brogan pauses a moment to collect his thoughts.

“I think it is the sense that I really get to touch people’s lives at a time when they are going through a lot of difficulties,” he says. “Part of what inspires me as an attorney is a strong desire to help people. I also really enjoy the public policy aspect of working on issues that can truly make a difference for people in their day-to-day lives.”

With his sharp mind and extensive professional expertise, combined with a warm and caring personality, Brogan is well-suited to helping people who are often undergoing great stress in their lives. His clients include caregivers of people suffering from dementia, people transitioning to long-term care facilities, parents of special needs children, and others.

“One of the things I often ask people, is ‘how are you doing?’” he says. “Occasionally I get someone with the stiff upper lip and they say ‘fine,’ but I know it’s far from the truth. By the time they are sitting in my chair they are usually long past ‘fine.’ I can’t make the bad situation go away; I can just make it a bit better.”

### Extensive Professional Expertise

The expertise he calls upon to make things better for clients is exemplified by his years in specialized practice—he founded Brogan Law Group in 2001—and a long list of related achievements.

Brogan has been certified as an elder law attorney by the ABA-accredited Elder Law Foundation since 2002. Only 44 of New Jersey’s nearly 80,000 attorneys hold that certification. He chaired the Elder and Disability Law section of the New Jersey State Bar Association and has twice received the bar’s Legislative Service Award for his lobbying efforts in elder law and special needs fields.

He serves on the public policy committee of the invitation only Special Needs Alliance, a “national, non-profit organization committed to helping individuals with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who represent them.” He is a member of the Council of Advanced Practitioners, an invitation only council

established by the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA). He has also served on the board of the academy and led the New Jersey chapter, which honored him as Chapter Member of the Year for 2013.

In typical unassuming fashion, Brogan doesn’t take the majority of credit for his achievements. Instead, he gives credit where he believes it is due, to his family and professional colleagues.

“I couldn’t do all that I do within the business or at the state and national level without the unending support of my beautiful wife, Jen,” Brogan says. “She homeschools all our children, makes sure that there’s a delicious home-cooked meal for us to share at the end of the day, and is by far the person I admire most. It’s easy to achieve meaningful things when you’re married to a saint. And despite all of the professional accolades and recognition I have received, my proudest accomplishment is being the happily married father to seven—soon to be eight—awesome kids.”

“And there are five people, in particular, to whom I owe a great deal professionally for reasons they each know well,” he continues. “Marilyn Askin, the founder of the Elder Law Section of the New Jersey State Bar Association, kindly published my first article in New Jersey Lawyer Magazine in 2002. As president of the New Jersey AARP, she has spent her life advocating for those in need. Gary Mazart, an original founder of NAELA, was the first elder law attorney to invite me to present a continuing legal education topic for attorneys at the state level.

“Dan Olszak has been both mentor and dear friend, and asked me years ago to succeed him as Chair of the Ocean County Elder Law Section,” he adds. “Don McHugh’s tireless zeal as an appellate advocate is an inspiration, and his personal support helped us get through the difficult times following the passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. And Tom Begley, a pioneer entrepreneur in elder law, opened doors for me at the national level. I will always greatly appreciate his friendship and advice.”

## A Family-Oriented Firm

Brogan’s people-oriented approach extends to the way he works with his staff, for whom he offers many accolades, and to the way he manages his firm. A family friendly management approach allows flexible office hours and the use of technology to communicate when it is more convenient than being in the office.

“I have a phenomenally dedicated group of people and you find ways to make them happy,” he says.

Associate attorney Melissa Hanhart Abu-Adas, the mother of a young child, works at home three days a week. She focuses primarily in Medicaid planning and also works in estate administration, estate planning and guardianships.

“She gets a tremendous amount of stuff done,” Brogan says. “We are both night owls, so we will have phone conferences after our kids are asleep and blow through stuff. She is fantastic, just really smart. She clerked for the appellate division. Her skill set is phenomenal. Behind that quiet exterior is a wicked-capable brain. Clients have really been thankful to work with her.

“My office manager, Joan Foley, who is exceptional, is also a paralegal. She faithfully came with me from our prior firm and is my sounding board in all major decisions. When she had her baby she brought her in for six months. We really try to do things that make it work for everyone.”

Ronicka Eckhart, client services coordinator, “has an excellent client service approach,” he continues. “She is so friendly and capable. I met her when she was waiting on us at a restaurant and she did such a fantastic job. ‘Do you mind if I ask if you are still in school?’ I said to her. It turned out she had a criminal justice degree—I hired her on the spot.”

With a firm founded on genuinely caring for people, it is no surprise that clients are treated in a very compassionate way.

“We try to do things in a loving and caring manner,” Brogan says. “We try to bring them into a

calm, low-pressure environment. We appreciate that clients are under tremendous stress by the time they look to us for help and they will be hard-pressed to find somebody who spends more time in the area of elder law than I do. We are a very well-educated firm. At the same time, one of my favorite compliments, which I get a lot is ‘you really don’t seem like a lawyer.’”

## On Becoming a Lawyer

When considering careers, Brogan, who was born on the same date as Jacques Cousteau and grew up surfing at the Jersey Shore, “toyed with the idea of becoming a marine biologist.” Ultimately, however, he followed the well-established path of previous family members and opted for law. His father, uncle and a cousin were all attorneys.

He always thought being an attorney meant arguing cases in court and because he enjoys the thrill of the well-thought-out argument, he answered the call when Rutgers opened up one of the country’s first elder law clinics going into his last year of law school.

“The sign posted said that you would get to represent impoverished seniors in the Camden area,” he remembers. “I thought, ‘cool, I get to go to court before even passing the bar.’ That is how I backed into elder law. I really didn’t know what it was at that point. NAELA was still relatively new—the organization was only three or four years old. It really coincided with a good time to be focusing in this area.”

Brogan also had a more personal reason for going into the specialty area.

“My grandmother had Alzheimer’s when I was in high school and someone needed to care for her at home full time,” he says. “My Aunt Noreen is a living saint and provided 24/7 care in



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her and my uncle's house. We moved nearby, and I helped out with Grandma's care. So I know what it was like having to live with Alzheimer's. Dealing with that experience also makes me determined to help people dealing with the same and similar issues."

A challenge that Brogan encounters in his practice is the changing policies and laws affecting Medicaid coverage for seniors and people with special needs. Through his immersion in the field, he stays on top of changes and is a nationally recognized expert in analyzing public policy issues related to Medicaid and healthcare. He lobbies for positive legislative and regulatory developments on behalf of seniors and those with special needs at the state, congressional and presidential level and was recently selected by NAELA's president to chair the organization's ABLE Act Task Force. Brogan is well-known to other attorneys within the area of elder law, lecturing around the country to attorneys at the state and national level regarding Medicaid planning, planning for people with special needs, and policy impacts of healthcare issues on seniors and those with special needs. He also recently became an adjunct professor of law at The Georgetown University Law Center.

Brogan wraps up talking about his impressive career with a single sentence that gets right to the heart of why he does what he does. "I am trying to use law as a tool to make everything better," he says.

## At A Glance

**Brogan Law Group, P.C.**

3728 River Rd.

Point Pleasant, NJ 08742

(732) 903-8914

www.BroganElderLaw.com

Bob@BroganElderLaw.com

## Practice Areas:

- Elder law, special needs planning, estate planning

## Education:

- B.A. Journalism & Mass Media and Political Science, Rutgers College, 1991
- JD, Rutgers School of Law, 1994

## Clerkship:

- Clerk, Judge William H. Huber, Presiding Judge Chancery Division, General Equity Part, Superior Court of New Jersey, Ocean County Vicinage, Toms River, 1994-95

## Admitted to Practice:

- New Jersey, 1994
- U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals, 2010
- District of New Jersey, 1995

## Professional Certifications:

- Certified Elder Law Attorney by the American Bar Association Accredited National Elder Law Foundation, 2002-Present

## Professional Memberships

- American Bar Association
- New Jersey Bar Association
- National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, NJNAELA Chapter
- Special Needs Alliance
- Council of Advanced Practitioners [in Elder Law]

## Professional Awards

- Martindale-Hubbell AV Preeminent Peer Review Rating
- Certified Elder Law Attorney
- NJNAELA Chapter Member of the Year, 2013
- Super Lawyer 2008-2013, Elder Law/Estate Planning
- Legislative Services Award, 2003 & 2005