

THE B&B ALERT

(800) 533-7227



**BEGLEY &
Bookbinder, PC**
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE
Specializing in Elder & Disability Law

No. 4 Vol. 4

April 28, 2006

Please visit us on the World Wide Web at: www.begleylawyer.com

FIRM RADIO SHOW STRESSES EARLY PLANNING FOR FAMILIES WITH AN AUTISTIC BENEFICIARY

By Dana E. Bookbinder, Esquire

As April is Autism Awareness Month, the firm invited Debbie Schmidt and Francine Hogan, co-chairs of this year's Walk for Autism Research, as guests on our weekly "Senior Forum" radio program this past Wednesday. "Senior Forum" airs 11 a.m. each Wednesday on WWDB 860 AM for an hour and features one of our attorneys interviewing a guest on various topics related to our practice areas. This past program's discussion focused on the urgency for parents of special needs children to be proactive in engaging in estate planning for their beneficiaries as well as proactive in obtaining early intervention for their children's conditions. Moreover, those without special needs children still must be aware of Autism in particular because more than any other developmental disorder, Autism is growing at an alarming rate and has reached pandemic numbers.

Both guests have been involved in the National Alliance for Autism Research (N.A.A.R.) for many years. This past February, N.A.A.R. merged with Autism Speaks, Inc., another advocacy group aiming to fund biomedical research for Autism. Both Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Hogan believe that the merger will create more opportunity to educate the general public on Autistic disorders as well as fund additional research.

As a result of the publicity campaign resulting from the merger in addition to the astounding increase of Autism cases, Autism is soon bound to become a household word. According to Autism Speaks, a new case of autism is diagnosed in the U.S. every 20 minutes. One in 166 children born today will be diagnosed with an Autistic disorder. The diagnosis has increased tenfold in the last decade. Boys are four times more likely than girls to have Autism.

The disorder impacts different individuals in very different ways. In many cases, affected individuals have great difficulty speaking and forming close relationships with others. The way in which an Autistic child reacts to external stimuli is often severely impacted. With Asperger's syndrome, one type of Autistic disorder regarded as a somewhat less pervasive form, for instance, a child may be very verbal, but could exhibit repetitive behaviors. The impact of any type of Autistic disorder is emotional and physical for the family and economic for society.

During Wednesday's radio program, Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Hogan raised awareness by describing their personal family experiences as affected by the disorder and urged parents to be proactive with treatment and planning. Parents who have a beneficiary with special needs must

establish an estate plan that provides for a guardian for that beneficiary as well as for any minor children. Any assets that they wish to leave to the special needs child should be placed into a special needs trust. The attorney who drafts the trust will give consideration as to the future requirements of that child for public benefits and draft the trust accordingly. Since this planning involves knowledge of public benefits programs and other specific legal areas, parents must look for an experienced attorney who focuses on disability law. Information on attorneys who are members of the Special Needs Alliance is available on our firm website, www.begleylawyer.com or directly from the Special Needs Alliance website at www.specialneedsalliance.com

Many activities are planned for the near future to raise awareness for Autism and funding. The biggest local event is the South Jersey Walk for Autism Research, which will take place at 9:00 a.m. on June 10, 2006, at Bishop's Gate Corporate Park, Mt. Laurel. On June 3, a similar walk will take place at the Philadelphia Zoo. Both walks will be held rain or shine. Families, individuals, and corporations are encouraged to participate by registering at www.autismwalk.org, or by calling the local Autism Speaks office at 856-755-0330. The office also has information on additional events, such as a group dinner at The Coastline Restaurant and Bar in Cherry Hill on May 23 from 7-9 pm and an outing to the Camden RiverSharks game June 25 at 1:05 pm.

While at this stage Autism receives less than 5% of the research funding of many less prevalent childhood diseases, those who advocate for additional Autism research believe they are beginning to gain momentum. We hope that they are right and that new research will lead to earlier medical detection, better treatment and a cure. Until that time comes, families must be especially proactive in their beneficiary's life and in their own planning.



*BEGLEY & BOOKBINDER hosts a weekly radio program on **WWDB 860 AM** on the radio dial from **11:00am to 12:00 pm** every **Wednesday**. Each week a different member of the firm hosts the program. Guests are invited. The topic changes on a weekly basis. The program is called "**Senior Forum**."*

*On Wednesday, April 5, 2006, our host will be **THOMAS D. BEGLEY, JR.** The guest will be **TIM O'BRIAN** of **MERRILL LYNCH**. Tune in for an hours worth of lively discussion. Call in questions are encouraged.*



Begley & Bookbinder, P.C. is an Elder & Disability Law Firm with offices in Moorestown, Stone Harbor and Lawrenceville, New Jersey and can be contacted at 800-533-7227. The firm services southern and central New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania.

The Firm provides services in connection with protecting assets from nursing home costs, Medicaid applications, Estate Planning and Estate Administration, Special Needs Planning and Guardianships. If you have a legal problem in one of these areas of law, contact Begley & Bookbinder at 800-533-7227.

Begley & Bookbinder has prepared **Special Reports** concerning *Special Needs Trusts, Vacation Area Homes – Tax and Management Issue and Utilizing Special Needs Trusts in Matrimonial Cases*. Please contact Begley & Bookbinder at 800-533-7227 or visit our website at www.begleylawer.com to obtain a **Special Report**.

Our web site contains a library of firm newsletters, articles, on-line forms for Medicaid, Estate Planning and Guardianship, as well as our upcoming speaking engagements, our products, and other relevant information.

If you have any comments, e-mail us at ccaruso@begleylawyer.com

If you are interested in having an Elder & Disabilities Law Attorney from Begley & Bookbinder speak at an event, please contact Colleen Caruso at (856) 787-4237.

This newsletter is not intended as a substitute for legal counsel. While every precaution has been taken to make this newsletter accurate, we assume no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for damages resulting from the use of the information in this newsletter.



Member, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
Copyright © 2004 by Begley & Bookbinder, P.C., 509 South Lenola, Building 7, Moorestown, NJ 08057

This newsletter is expressly produced to be sent electronically. If you know someone who would also like to receive this electronic newsletter, please have him or her e-mail us ccaruso@begleylawyer.com