

# COPLAN+CRANE CHRONICLES

## COPLAN + CRANE ELEVATES THREE ATTORNEYS TO PARTNER



We are proud to announce that three associate attorneys — **Blake Vance**, **Stephen Blecha** and **Ervin Nevitt** — have all been made partners in the firm.

“These attorneys have all done outstanding work on behalf of our clients and have been instrumental in the growth of our firm,” says **Ben Crane**, the managing partner and co-founder of Coplan + Crane. “They have earned this, and we are honored to make them partners.”

All three attorneys have played crucial roles in big cases over the past several years, including a \$4.8 million verdict for a woman who lost her son in a Chicago shooting, a \$3 million settlement in a wrongful death case involving a downed stop sign, a \$1.5 million verdict in a medical malpractice case, an \$11.5 million settlement in a bad faith insurance case and a record \$15 million verdict for the family of a woman killed in a truck accident.



Blake Vance

**Blake Vance** joined the firm in 2011 as a paralegal, becoming an associate attorney in 2012 after earning his law degree from John Marshall Law School. In 2017, he was named one of the Forty Under 40 attorneys in Chicago by the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*. He has been selected to the Super Lawyers Rising Stars list every year since 2017.

“I am honored to be named partner at Coplan + Crane and grateful to receive recognition for the hard work and dedication we have put into the firm,” says Blake. “I am thankful to be a part of Coplan + Crane and look forward to what we will accomplish in the future for our clients.”

► continued on page 2

### CARBON MONOXIDE

is an odorless, colorless gas that is produced by the burning of fuel in furnaces, gas ranges and fireplaces.

If it builds up in the home, it can be poisonous and can even be deadly.

Here are steps to protect your family:



Have carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Check the batteries regularly.



Have your gas or oil heating system serviced by a qualified technician every year.



Make sure gas appliances are vented properly.



Have your chimney checked or cleaned every year.



Never use a portable generator indoors.

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Coplan + Crane Elevates Three Attorneys To Partner	1-2
Firm Happenings	2
\$1.5 Million Verdict in Medical Malpractice Case	3
Support Staff Spotlight	4

# COPLAN + CRANE ELEVATES THREE ATTORNEYS TO PARTNER

(CONTINUED FROM COVER)



Stephen Blecha

**Stephen Blecha** started with the firm as a clerk in 2011 and became an associate attorney in 2012 after earning his law degree from the University of Illinois College of Law. He is an active member of the Illinois Trial Lawyers' Association, serving as a member of the Amicus Committee, and was a contributor to the *ITLA Medical Malpractice Notebook*. He was selected to the Super Lawyers Rising Stars list for 2020.

"I was honored to be named a partner," says Stephen. "Coplan + Crane is a special place, where passion and positivity thrive. It is a team-focused environment, and I am proud to say that everyone here cares deeply about the work we do, and the people we help."



Erv Nevitt

**Erv Nevitt** started at the firm as a paralegal in 2012, becoming an associate after graduating from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2014. He has been very active in the American Association for Justice, serving on the Minority Caucus Executive Committee, the Diversity Committee and as a Board of Governors Representative.

"This is a great honor," says Erv. "I am proud to be part of a firm that cares so much and works so hard on behalf of our clients. Everyone here is dedicated to making a difference by helping people who have been hurt." ■

## FIRM HAPPENINGS



Ben Crane

**Ben Crane** will be presented with the Champion Award by Oak-Leyden Developmental Services, which serves children and adults with developmental disabilities.

The award is given to people who have made a significant contribution in championing the mission, programs and services of the organization. Ben has been a longtime active supporter of Oak-Leyden and previously served on its Board of Directors.



He will receive the award at Carnivale Chicago on February 21 at "Oak-Leyden Unmasked," the organization's annual fund-raising event. ■



Julia Dwyer

**Julia Dwyer** conducted a presentation at the 2020 Paralegal Seminar hosted by the Attorneys Information Exchange Group in Atlanta on February 6 and 7.

Her 30-minute presentation was titled "*Trial Prep in 3 Months: The Storm Before The Storm*" and focused on the work paralegals need to do to prepare a case for trial.

"Our firm goes to trial often, and there's a process that has come together over the past few years," Julia says. "So I developed an outline covering the things that need to be accomplished each month as we head into trial to help our attorneys be successful. I thought having a checklist that we can all use and share would be helpful." ■

## It's a girl!



Emma Florian

Paralegal **Emma Florian** gave birth to her second child. Lilah-Jane was born on the afternoon of January 7, weighing 7 pounds, 4 ounces.

Both mother and daughter are doing well.



# \$1.5 MILLION VERDICT IN MEDICAL MALPRACTICE CASE

When medical professionals are negligent, the people they are supposed to help can experience serious health consequences.

In December, Coplan + Crane won a case that helped the family of a disabled man who needlessly suffered for years as a child and required life-changing surgery because of failure to diagnose a congenital disorder.

Nathan Clements was born in 1997 with Down syndrome. When Nathan needed routine checkups or other medical care, his mother Deanna Williams took him to see Dr. Raymond Davis, a pediatrician at Rockford Health Physicians.

Since birth, Nathan had suffered from chronic and severe constipation, says **Ted Jennings**, who along with **Stephen Blecha**, represented Deanna on behalf of Nathan. Davis treated Nathan by keeping him on a strong laxative, but Ted says he never tried to determine the cause of the constipation.

“Nathan suffered from this problem for the entirety of his childhood,” says Ted.

In 2013, Dr. Davis referred Nathan – then 16 years old – to a pediatric gastroenterologist. Nathan was diagnosed with Hirschsprung’s disease. It’s a birth defect that causes problems with constipation as the result of missing nerve cells in the muscles in part of the colon.

Down syndrome is a significant and well-known risk factor for the disease.

Ted says Nathan underwent several surgeries to correct the condition. As a result of repeated failure to diagnose Hirschsprung’s disease, Nathan was unable to be potty-trained and ultimately required a colostomy and colostomy bag.



Deanna Williams turned to Coplan + Crane. We helped her file a lawsuit against Davis and Rockford Health Physicians in 2016, claiming that they were negligent by failing to refer Nathan to a specialist long before they did. The suit noted that Nathan had sustained severe and permanent injuries, suffered pain and anguish, and would be unable to enjoy a normal life.

The case eventually went to trial in 2019.

While preparing for the case, we consulted with experts about the treatment Nathan received and asked them what actions they felt should have been taken.

“Our medical experts testified that Dr. Davis should have referred Nathan to a pediatric gastroenterologist much earlier when he didn’t respond to treatment for constipation,” Ted says.

“Chronic constipation was a symptom that should have aggressively been followed up on when Nathan was still a child. But Dr. Davis never ordered a workup to determine what was causing it. Had this been done, Nathan would have had a much better chance of becoming continent and avoiding a colostomy.”

The jury agreed that the doctor and the medical practice were negligent and awarded Williams \$750,000 for Nathan’s past and future pain and suffering, \$250,000 for his past and future loss of a normal life and \$500,000 for future medical care – a total of \$1.5 million.

While the verdict does not change Nathan’s condition, we were able to get a positive result for our client and hold a negligent medical professional accountable.

“The jury understood that Nathan didn’t have to suffer like this,” says Stephen. “They made the right decision.” ■

## ...SPOTLIGHT...



**GIA BENLINE**, a paralegal, earned an associate's degree in paralegal studies from MacCormac College and graduated from Robert Morris University with a degree in Pre-Law Studies. She has previously worked at several law firms in Chicago, and notes that this is her first paralegal job that's not in the Loop!

Gia says she has always wanted to work in the legal field. She began studying criminal justice in college, then considered becoming a court reporter before deciding to become a paralegal.

She started at Coplan + Crane in November after a recruiter felt she would be a good fit here. Gia says the recruiter was right.

"I love the challenges of being a paralegal," Gia says. "It can get very busy here, and there are a lot of responsibilities. But this is a great environment to be in and the work we do here is helping people."

Gia lives in Westchester and enjoys reading and knitting. ■



**KATHY SORCE**, a paralegal, graduated from DePaul University with a degree in political science. She previously worked at Johnson & Bell in Chicago.

Kathy came in for an interview with us last year. Greg Coplan had worked with her at Goldberg Weisman Cairo and was familiar with her work. We felt

she was the right person for the job, and she joined Coplan + Crane in October.

A big part of her job is working on medical summaries. She follows up on cases to get copies of medical records and checks in with clients regarding their treatment and how they're doing. She also deals with insurance companies to determine the amount of money available to clients.

It's very similar to the work she did at her last job, but Kathy says she made the right move. "It's going very well. This is a great place to work," she says.

Kathy lives in River Forest. ■

### OFFICE INFORMATION

1111 Westgate Street | Oak Park, IL 60301

**Call us at (708) 358-8080  
or toll-free at (800) 394-6002**

**[www.coplancrane.com](http://www.coplancrane.com)**



**COPLAN+CRANE**

1111 WESTGATE STREET  
OAK PARK, ILLINOIS 60301

### EDITORIAL NOTES

Rebecca Burchell  
Intake Specialist  
708.358.8080 Voice  
708.358.8181 Fax

 Like us on Facebook

 Follow us on Twitter

#### Advertising Material

This newsletter is published as a source of information only. The material contained herein is not to be construed as legal advice or opinion. Readers should seek specific legal advice before taking any action with respect to matters mentioned in this publication. ©2020 Coplan + Crane. All rights reserved.