



National Academy of
Elder Law Attorneys, Inc.

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National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys Awards Cohn Sisters' Scholarship for Patient Advocacy

Washington, D.C. -- The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) announced its selection of Brendon Froehlich, Danbury, Conn.; Mary Roque, Medfield, Mass.; and Diane Surgeon, Lumberton, N.C.; as the 2010 recipients of the Cohn Sister's Scholarship for Patient Advocacy.

The scholarship was established through the NAELA Memorial Fund in memory of Vivian Cohn Smith and Lorrie Cohn, sisters of NAELA Fellow Helen Cohn Needham. This annual scholarship is available to Elder Law attorneys who are unable to afford to attend a NAELA Annual Meeting, and who would use the training to assist and advocate on behalf of the disabled and incapacitated.

The Cohn Sisters' Scholarships for Patient Advocacy are made possible through the continuing generous donations made in the names of Vivian and Lorrie to the NAELA Memorial Fund, by their family and friends, Needham, Mitnick & Pollack, PLC, and other individuals and law firms. Vivian passed away in November 1997 after a 10-year fight against breast cancer. She learned the value of patient advocacy from her own experience; Vivian was a disability worker for the state of North Carolina and used what she had learned as a patient to advocate on behalf of others. Lorrie died in November 2005 from pneumonia and complications of asthma. Lorrie was a certified intensive care nurse, and later a triage nurse for Kaiser Permanente. She always considered patient advocacy to be an essential part of her caregiving.

Brendon Froehlich has been practicing law for almost four years. For two years he worked for a large firm with a practice focused primarily in municipal law and civil litigation. His decision to change his career path to Elder Law has been "incredibly rewarding." Brendan says: "The sense of purpose that I feel when I have done something as simple as explaining the transfer rules of Medicaid or the affects of a durable power of attorney to a client or to a group of captivated seniors is beyond gratifying."

Mary Roque has been an attorney for 20 years and has only been practicing Elder Law for two years, since her mother died of pancreatic cancer. “During [my mother’s] illness, her doctor was her advocate for her independence and I am now trying to help others whose misguided family members may need a reminder of the autonomy and dignity of each person. I did not realize that this decision making power was [my mother’s] last strength and use of her will. I have been successful in helping my clients decide where they want to live and how they want to be cared for. In short, I learned a great deal from that doctor’s few words and hope to pass it on to my clients and their families.”

Diane Surgeon is CEO of ComForcare Senior Services. “With a goal of helping seniors and their families plan more effectively to avoid the harshness and possible financial devastation of long-term custodial and nursing home care, I established The Elder Law Center – Surgeon Law Firm, PLLC. Our primary focus is helping clients prepare for their “elder care journey” by developing life care plans which address the long-term health care, geriatric care management, chronic disease management, legal, and financial concerns specific to the client. “

ABOUT NAELA

Established in 1987, the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) is a non-profit association that assists lawyers, bar organizations, and others. Members of NAELA are attorneys who are experienced and trained in working with the legal problems of aging Americans and individuals of all ages with disabilities. The mission of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys is to establish NAELA members as the premier providers of legal advocacy, guidance, and services to enhance the lives of people with special needs and people as they age. NAELA currently has more than 4,000 members across the United States. For more information, visit www.NAELA.org.

ABOUT ELDER AND SPECIAL NEEDS LAW

Elder and Special Needs Law is a specialized area of law that involves representing, counseling and assisting seniors, people with disabilities and their families in connection with a variety of legal issues, with a primary emphasis on promoting the highest quality of life for individuals. Typically, Elder and Special Needs Law address the convergence of legal needs with the social, psychological, medical, and financial needs of individuals. The Elder and Special Needs Law practitioner handles estate planning and counsels clients about planning for incapacity with health care decision making documents. The attorney also assists clients in planning for possible long-term care needs, including at-home care, assisted living or nursing home care. Locating the appropriate type of care, coordinating public and private resources to finance the cost of care, settling up special needs trusts, and working to ensure the client's right to quality care are all part of the Elder and Special Needs Law practice.

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