

BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

Beware the Internet When Hiring Your Attorney

By John P. Paone Jr.

Years ago, the New Jersey Supreme Court determined that it is in the interest of the public to have attorneys in various legal disciplines certified. According to the Court, the certification program is an effort both to protect consumers from false advertising and to raise the level of competence of attorneys in our state. Only after undergoing a vigorous vetting process that includes a clean ethics record, judicial and peer review, requisite years and experience in the field of practice, the acquisition of continuing legal education credits over and above those required to practice law, and after passage of a written exam are attorneys certified in New Jersey.

Over time, certification has evolved into a kind of gold standard and a resource the public can rely upon in a world where so-

cial media and the internet can transmit all types of misinformation and spurious claims regarding attorney qualifications.

But now an internet advertising practice threatens to undermine the certification program and, in the process, confuse the public. Attorneys who are not certified can purchase from Google the names of certified attorneys as search engine terms. This results in members of the public attempting to search for "Attorney Jones," for example, who they have learned is certified and of stellar reputation, and instead finding "Attorney Smith" who is not certified.

One would think it self-evident that the purchase of another attorney's name can only serve to achieve a result which is deceitful, improper and unethical. The State Bar of North Caroli-



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na has already banned this practice as dishonest conduct. Incredibly, however, a

ruling by our own Advisory Committee on Professional Ethics, Opinion 735, would

permit such unscrupulous behavior for attorneys in New Jersey.

To its credit, the New Jersey Supreme Court recently appointed The Honorable Jeffrey R. Jablonski as a Special Master to review this matter. I would respectfully submit that the Special Master should be tasked to answer the following question: "Why would someone purchase the name of a fellow practitioner in the first place?"

The obvious answer to this question leads to the conclusion that if the polestar of our legal system is to protect the public, there can be no justification for such conduct. Attorneys have always been held to a higher standard than that which is condoned in the marketplace. It must be made clear that the tenets of professionalism prohibit attorneys from engaging in

this type of manipulation of internet search.

To protect the certification program, the Court must not allow the name and reputation of certified attorneys to be used as fodder for an internet advertisement scheme designed to deceive potential clients. We know that practitioners cannot falsely claim to be certified when they are not...neither should they be able to purchase from Google the name of a certified attorney to garner the attention of the unsuspecting public.

John P. Paone Jr. is certified by the Supreme Court of New Jersey as a Matrimonial Law Attorney, a past chair of the Supreme Court Board on Attorney Certification, and the Managing Partner of the Law Offices of Paone, Zaleski & Murphy, a divorce and family law firm in Red Bank.

FULLILL ANNOUNCES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS



TYNIESHA DOUGLAS



NICHOELE M.J. PEGUESE

NEPTUNE – Fulfill, a leader in alleviating hunger and building food security in Monmouth and Ocean counties, welcomes Tyniesha Douglas and Nichoele M.J. Peguese to its board of trustees.

"We are thrilled to welcome Tyniesha and Nichoele to our board," said Triada Stampas, president and CEO of Fulfill. "The wealth of experience they bring to Fulfill complements our diverse and growing board of dedicated professionals and will further our mission of ensuring all people have access to enough nutritious food to maintain an active

and healthy life."

Douglas, an educator with more than 20 years of experience, currently serves as supervisor of social studies for Montgomery Township High School and as assistant director of Rays of Hope, Inc., where she provides leadership development opportunities and designs and facilitates community service projects for youth. She has also served in different volunteer capacities including president of the Jersey Shore Chapter of Mocha Moms as well as program director, teen advisor and lead teen advisor of Jack

and Jill of America, Inc. – Jersey Shore Chapter. Douglas resides in Howell.

Peguese is an attorney and human resources professional with global experience representing companies in all aspects of employment law, including ADA, FMLA and compliance issues. She has worked in various industries such as rehabilitation and re-entry, utilities and mortgage services. As an active volunteer, Peguese is a member of Monmouth County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., National Council of Negro Women – North Area Chapter, and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. – Jersey Shore Chapter. Peguese resides in Howell.

Fulfill, a nonprofit organization and member of Feeding America, has been providing food for families at the Jersey Shore for more than 38 years. In 2022, through its network of nearly 300 community partners, including food pantries and soup kitchens, it provided more than 13.1 million nutritious meals to families, children, seniors, veterans and more.

MONMOUTH REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CELEBRATES INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS



TOM ZAPCIC PHOTOGRAPHY

2023 Monmouth Regional Chamber of Commerce board and officers.

FREEHOLD – The Monmouth Regional Chamber of Commerce (MRCC) which serves all of Monmouth County, celebrated its Installation of Officers Jan. 23 with Sen. Vin Gopal, who administered the oath of office to the MRCC board and its officers.

The annual meeting was well attended by its members and guests at Jumping Brook Country Club in Neptune. It was an evening of celebration as the MRCC continues to promote the business interests of its members and serve the community. Gopal delivered an informative Monmouth County business update.

Terese Rölke, the executive director of the Monmouth Regional Chamber of Commerce said, "We are here to serve our members by providing the connections and information they need to build stronger businesses. We have a variety of opportunities throughout each month, from breakfast meetings to business after-hours, where we spotlight our members. We help our members to 'Maximize Their Membership' while

building strong relationships."

Reflecting on the evening, Sherilyn Przelomski, president of the Monmouth Regional Chamber of Commerce added, "We are here for our members to help them succeed. We provide opportunities for business growth and serve as a resource leader for our members. We will continue to focus on business education, networking events, and providing the maximum benefits to our members."

The MRCC provides quality services, events and resources to help the business community succeed. The MRCC is also generous to local nonprofits by fundraising at events and collecting needed items. In 2022, the MRCC hosted 125 events. The Monmouth Regional Chamber of Commerce's mission statement is: Strengthening business and community through shared innovation, information and planning for the future.

For more information visit monmouthregionalchamber.com.

Judge Vincent Falcetano Joins Team at Hill Wallack

RED BANK – Hill Wallack LLP announced that the Hon. Vincent N. Falcetano Jr. J.S.C., retired, has joined the firm's Alternative Dispute Resolution/Mediation Department. To the firm's Red Bank office Falcetano brings over 40 years of legal experience in various capacities that give him a unique ability to assist parties in resolving their disputes through private mediation and arbitration.

Falcetano is available to mediate and arbitrate a wide variety of disputes including insurance, employment, business, corporate, personal injury and medical malpractice matters. The Superior Court of New Jersey has

included him on its official list of approved mediators.

Prior to joining Hill Wallack, Falcetano served in Monmouth County as a New Jersey Superior Court judge. He presided over numerous jury trials and non-jury bench trials, covering a wide variety of testimonial and nontestimonial motions.

Before joining the Superior Court bench, Falcetano was a well-known and sought after successful trial attorney in Monmouth County and throughout the state. He tried numerous civil and criminal cases while he was affiliated with several prominent firms in the Monmouth County

area. He was also active as an arbitrator of civil matters, as well as a labor arbitrator of disputes under collective bargaining agreements.

Falcetano previously served in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, where he led, supervised, and mentored the largest staff of trial lawyers in the largest prosecutor's office in the state.

Hill Wallack managing partner Michael Kahme stated, "With a résumé like his, full of history and accomplishments, we are thrilled to welcome Judge Falcetano to the team at Hill Wallack."

For more information, visit hillwallack.com.

EXIT Realty Affiliated Office Welcome New Team Members

HOLMDEL – Local EXIT Realty East Coast announced the addition of *Erica Labarca, Roxanne Bushey, Nancy Mercado and Luciana Dias Lourenco* to their team of dedicated real estate professionals.

The company is actively expanding its sales team and plans to add 30 more professionals in the coming months.

EXIT Realty East Coast is an involved member of the community both locally and through its affiliation with EXIT Realty Corp. International. EXIT Realty East Coast is located at 57 E. Main St., Holmdel. For more information, visit exitrealtyleastcoast.com.