

# THE DAILY RECORD

LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

## UP & COMING ROCHESTER ATTORNEYS 2006

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While a law student clerking for Court of Appeals Associate Judge Victoria A. Graffeo, Michael A. Sciortino learned to translate the law, which is extremely technical, into an easier-to-understand language for the layman.

Judge Graffeo was working in the Appellate Division, Third Department, at that time. Sciortino was a student at Albany Law School of Union University.

Today, whether he's serving on the bench as a part-time judge for the Town of Parma, or serving his clients as a litigator with ChamberlainD'Amanda, Sciortino keeps Judge Graffeo's valuable lesson in mind.

"It's a challenge to do," Sciortino, 30, admits, "but I've always tried to do that in my trial lawyer work here, and on the bench."

Making the law accessible to all seems to be the highlight of all of Sciortino's work in and out of his offices. His expertise finds him representing individuals with personal injuries in state and federal courts; individuals in employment matters including discrimination, termination and severance negotiation; and individuals with claims for social security disability or long-term disability benefits.

### Interests, community involvement

Playing bass guitar in a local rock band has also given him the opportunity to represent some other bands in areas of entertainment law.

"The more well-balanced an individual is, the more likeable that individual is in all different areas and all different groups of the population," the Up & Coming Attorney explained.

*"I think I have the best of both worlds. I can advocate zealously for clients on their issues as a trial lawyer, and as a judge I can protect individuals' rights who appear in front of me."*



"Because I can spend time with them as a musician, now I can spend time with them as lawyer."

How Sciortino can spend time doing anything is a mystery: he coaches the Hilton High School Mock Trial Team; is a member of the Sicilian Sports Club (and its former vice president); is vice president of the Italian American Community Center; is a member of the Casa Italiana of Nazareth College; serves on the board of directors for The Commission Project, which places volunteer music educators into various schools; and is an Eagle scout and assistant Boy Scout leader for BSA Troop 92.

He is a past co-chair and member of the Monroe County Bar Association's Justice Committee, and a member of the New York State Bar Association. He is the secretary of the Monroe County Magistrate's Association, and its former treasurer, and several other professional organizations count Sciortino as a member: the New York State Magistrate's Association, the National Conference of State Trial Judges, the judicial division of the American Bar Association and the American Trial Lawyers Association.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays in alternate months, he works as a judge in Parma, handling arraignments and criminal dispositions in addition to presiding over a variety of civil matters.

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"It's pretty involved, but I feel as though I have a very nice balance between my trial work here and my judicial work with the town," Sciortino said.

### **Background**

He grew up in Spencerport, which is "right next door," so in 2000 when an opening occurred on the bench, "I thought, 'You know what? This community's been very supportive and good to me over the years, I will seek consideration.'"

He was subsequently re-elected to the post in the next two general elections, but he said he doesn't harbor aspirations for full-time judicial work.

"I think I have the best of both worlds," he said. "I can advocate zealously for clients on their issues as a trial lawyer, and as a judge I can protect individuals' rights who appear in front of me. So, in fact, I have a commitment to the legal community and I have a commitment to the community I serve."

His advice to younger attorneys is to do much of the same: "Stay very close-knit with your community and be as involved as you can."

Sciortino received his bachelor's degree in political science, with minors in philosophy and legal studies, from the University of Rochester in 1997, but he said that, because Rochester has no law school, he ended up in Albany instead.

"I really wanted to return here" to Monroe County, he said. "I'm intrigued by the members of the bar here and the legal community."

While in law school, he served as director of the school's

Moot Court program. He was also a student of the Albany American Inns of Court and received the National Order of Barristers for his achievements in mock trial competitions.

Upon graduation in 2000, he went to work immediately for ChamberlainD'Amanda.

"Among attorneys, among businesses and among individuals, they had an excellent reputation," he said. "I had a few offers to sort through, but it was nice that ChamberlainD'Amanda was one of them."

He was admitted to the New York bar in January 2001.

Without a doubt, Sciortino instills the same passion he holds for the law in his mock trial team students, many of whom he also allows to shadow him around through his busy days.

"We go to the courthouse, or I'll help them to get an internship at the courthouse. I get them acquainted with the law, to see if it's something that's right for them," he said.

He holds his clients in the same high regard, he said.

"I treat all clients the same. They get the same treatment from me regardless as to whether it's a traffic matter in some town or village court, or a multi-million dollar commercial case. They get the same treatment from me in court."

"I always wanted to be a lawyer, ever since I was a young boy," he said. "As a trial lawyer, you're involved right in the middle of law. You're presenting, advocating for a client to a group of their peers who are sitting in a jury box and you're demonstrating that your client's case is the position that they should accept. I'm a zealous advocate for my clients."