

DOZEN WHO  MADE A DIFFERENCE

A 'Cheerleader' For Head Trauma Victims

PAUL SLAGER POURS HEART INTO HELPING PEOPLE WITH BRAIN INJURIES

By **ROBIN DeMERELL**

From newborns who survive traumatic births to football players who suffer blows to the head, attorney **Paul Slager** has seen the devastating effects of traumatic brain injuries. And his efforts to aid the victims have gone beyond the courtroom to the public arena.

Since 2006, Slager has been actively involved with the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut, serving as president from July 2008 to this past September and currently serving as vice president. His efforts to raise awareness of traumatic brain injury recently earned him the organization's President's Award.

"Many of my cases involve serious brain injuries and I found, when working with these victims, that their lives were catastrophically changed and they had trouble convincing people of that," said Slager, a partner with **Silver Golub & Teitell** in Stamford. "I am side by side with those I represent, learning about their difficulties."

Julie Peters, executive director of the organization known as BIAC, said Slager's work has been crucial. Slager also is a member of the National Traumatic Brain Injury Litigation Group of the American Association for Justice.

"Whether it is attending a support group meeting of brain injury survivors, testifying at a legislative hearing, writing articles for BIAC's professional publications, advising staff on issues, participating in and sponsoring fundraising events or being BIAC's greatest cheerleader, Paul



Once a commercial litigator, Paul Slager has successfully helped victims of traumatic brain injury to rebuild their lives. His work recently earned him honors from the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut.

Jesse Naider



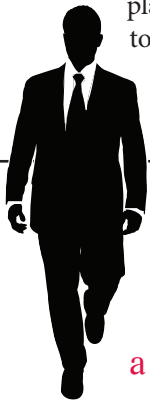
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Slager has done it all," Peters said. "His integrity, sincerity and selflessness have all been invaluable during his years of service."

After leaving a commercial litigation practice in Chicago years ago to head east, Slager jumped at the chance to change his legal direction. His work has included some of the state's most highly publicized cases.

Recently, he filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Yale University in the slaying of doctoral student Annie Le, whose body was found in the wall of a school research lab after she was killed by a co-worker. The complaint alleges Yale failed to take adequate steps to protect women on campus, a claim the university denies.

He is also representing two victims of the 2010 Kleen Energy power plant explosion in Middletown, including the widow of a Canadian man who died in the blast.



Slager said his work with the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut helps him to better connect with the needs of his clients and to create a care plan designed to maximize quality of life.

Slager has recovered millions for plaintiffs, including victims of traumatic brain injury, according to his firm's web site. Settlements he has negotiated include \$2.75 million on behalf of a child who suffered head injuries when dropped by a caregiver who fell down a dangerously defective stairway; \$3.125 million for two brain injury survivors injured in a Long Island Sound boating collision; and \$2.5 million for a pedestrian who suffered traumatic brain injury when she

was struck by a car while crossing the street.

In other cases, Slager has recovered \$15 million in a wrongful death case involving the death of a Connecticut child; \$10 million and \$6.4 million, respectively, in two separate medical malpractice cases against Connecticut hospitals and physicians on behalf of infants; and \$5 million in a medical negligence case for the widow of a man who died from a treatable post-surgical complication.

Misunderstood Malady

In all of his cases, Slager has found it takes a lot more than a law degree to serve the needs of clients. Traumatic brain injury, he said, is often misunderstood.

Caused by an impact or jolt to the head that disrupts normal brain function, it affects nearly 2 million people a year and can range from mild to severe. No two cases, he said, are the same.

Accident victims with feeding tubes

may need round-the-clock care; babies with cerebral palsy may have subtle effects that need to be monitored through years of development; and veterans with brain injury are often poorly understood not only by the legal community, but by the medical community and society in general.

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signed to maximize quality of life.

"In mild cases, where there is not a dramatic impact, only some symptoms may be present and can include personality changes and distractibility," he said. "Some people need cognitive therapy; it really varies. In lawsuits involving brain trauma, the consequences are personal to the case. It's hard to put dollars on a care plan."

His work today seems light years removed from his beginnings as a commercial litigator.

"This was a big transition. I was always interested in working with people more than companies. This was the perfect opportunity to represent people who needed help and work at a place with serious legal thinkers," he said of his firm.

His practice areas now include plaintiff representation in cases stemming from medical malpractice, violent crimes, serious accidents, defective consumer products and sexual abuse and harassment.

One of the greatest challenges for people afflicted with traumatic brain injury is the need for more resources, he said. The Brain Injury Association, located in Windsor, helps people to navigate the system by putting them in touch with trained professionals who understand the injury and can make referrals to direct resources.

"It's important that the association have an understanding from the survivors as to what their challenges are and what they are struggling with. There is no back up for the BIA," Slager said. "It's where people go to learn what resources are available for them. It's an inspiring staff."

Slager said his work with the organization has dual rewards.

"It's been a terrific volunteer opportunity for me to help those who I work with already in my practice. I can help make a difference for people who really need it." ■