

# Daily Journal

MAY 8, 2019



# WOMEN

## TOP WOMEN LAWYERS 2019

### Christine D. Spagnoli

It's vital for Spagnoli to know the "ins and outs" of cars. She specializes in automobile defect cases and often opposes large motor companies in trial.

A repeat opponent of Ford Motor Co., some of her landmark victories have resulted in car suppliers recalling parts or changing methods to make vehicles safer for the public.

"I am somebody who lives the case," Spagnoli said. "I get into the details and the technical issues. I find them very interesting and challenging."

In March 2018, Spagnoli obtained a \$25.9 million jury verdict as co-lead trial counsel for a family whose church vehicle, a Ford E-350 15-passenger van, crashed in North Florida, killing a passenger Michalanne Salliotte and the driver. Several others were injured. The tread separated from the left rear tire, which led to the crash, according to court documents. *Salliotte v. Ford Motor Co.*, 2014-CA-001436 (6th Jud. Cir. Fla., filed Nov. 6, 2014).

The defense argued that Salliotte did not fasten her seatbelt, therefore Ford could not be held liable, according to court documents. Spagnoli countered with claims that the van was designed with seatbelts that



fell under the seats, making it difficult for passengers to find and properly use them.

She is passionate about the cases she handles, Spagnoli said.

"It's an opportunity in bringing these individual cases to get compensation for the individuals that have been harmed but also to expose to the public the risk associated with the product and to put pressure on the

**GREENE, BROILLET & WHEELER, LLP**

SANTA MONICA

Practice Type: Product liability

manufacturers to do something to modify its vehicles or recall them," Spagnoli said.

Before *Salliotte v. Ford*, Spagnoli tried an eerily similar case in 2011 and obtained more than \$70 million as compensation for her clients.

"It gives me a second motivation that we're doing something that is helpful to the community at large, not just to get compensation for our clients," Spagnoli said.

While she has earned recognition for her work in consumer safety, Spagnoli said she hopes more women will be recognized for their excellence in the courtroom.

"There's still glass ceilings in this arena. They've been broken to some extent but we're still not at parity or at equality in terms of the number of the recognition of women," Spagnoli said. "But I do my best to help other women along and help encourage them to get in the courtroom and not be intimidated."

— Alexandra Applegate