

# PHILIP SIEFF:

## Groundbreaking result in methadone case

Having handled more than 75 wrongful death cases in his career, cases large and small, high-profile and unknown, Philip Sieff obtained a first of its kind ruling this year — that a methadone clinic had to protect the public from its improper treatment practices.

After this court ruling, death claims went forward against the clinic, Pinnacle Recovery Services of Brainerd, and its CEO and prescribing physician, Dr. John Stroemer. The plaintiffs were the families of two young men killed in a traffic collision caused by a patient of the clinic and doctor who was driving under the influence of methadone.

Sieff, investigation department supervising attorney at Robins Kaplan LLP, has handled cases such as the I-35W bridge collapse and the Red Lake High School shootings, which reflected some of the most disturbing and harmful trends affecting America such as infrastructure neglect and gun violence, said Kate Lutes, communications and event specialist at Robins Kaplan.

“Personally, all my cases have the same priority to me, whether a famous or well-known case or the methadone case. All have equal importance. Some of my most satisfying cases the public will never know about but they helped people to move on (with their lives),” Sieff said.

He said he practices personal injury law because he was raised to respect the rights of others, to fight back against the rich and powerful and to look out for the good of society. He believes every person in our country has a right to equal access to the courts and to justice.

In the methadone case, the clinic agreed to be adjudicated negligent after more than two years of litigation and two weeks before trial. Under a *Miller-Shugart* settlement arrangement, the families agreed to collect judgments only from the liability insurers for the clinic and the doctor.

Both insurers initially denied coverage and after further action, the court ruled that one insurance company didn't have to provide coverage and the other one did, Sieff says. There was a negotiated settlement.

—Betsy Carlson

