

STAYING IN TOUCH

At Rich Cassidy Law, we focus on representing individuals. We have great clients with whom we tend to develop personal relationships. We care about you and want to stay in touch. If we can be helpful, even if it's with a referral outside of our practice areas, please feel free to call—Rich

PRACTICING LAW DURING A PANDEMIC

The coronavirus pandemic has launched a worldwide, mass experiment in the practice of law by remote means.

Of course, this isn't wholly new. All of us who have been in practice long enough have seen our practices change a great deal since use of the internet became widespread. And many lawyers have adopted digitally enabled techniques to enhance their practices in very significant ways. A few have been practicing remotely exclusively for more than a decade.

When Vermont Governor Scott's Executive Order required workers in non-essential job categories to stay home, and with similar orders in California, New York State, and elsewhere, lawyers all embarked upon an unprecedented worldwide experiment in the remote practice of law.

Massive Use of New Technology

Across our profession, thousands upon thousands of lawyers are working remotely for the first time. Lawyers, who, until this month, relied upon paper files are learning that they simply must have electronic, remote access to their cases. Real estate lawyers are struggling to figure out how to conduct closings without in-person meetings. Town clerk's offices have been closed to title searchers. Lawyers, who at the drop of a hat would jump on an airplane to take a deposition far from home, are exploring various platforms for video conference depositions. Remote notarization of documents has quickly, if so far temporarily, been adopted in Vermont. Electronic wills will be next. At present, only essential cases are going forward in court. We can expect, as the pandemic continues, what had been rare use of court telephone and video appearances will become ubiquitous. Courts that previously refused electronic filing are accepting filings by email. In person continuing legal education programs, required for all lawyers, are being canceled and many providers are not planning to reschedule them. Instead, they are joining the ranks of CLE providers who have already been using technology to present their programming.

Even mediations, where a premium has been placed on person-to-person contact, are now being scheduled on video platforms. My own experience working with Zoom suggests that, although in person mediation remains preferable, video mediation works well.

A New Normal

Even if you're a cockeyed optimist, and you think this pandemic will pass soon, the experiences of lawyers, and their clients, with the high-volume use of remote technologies to facilitate practice, suggest that we should not hold our breath expecting things to return to normal. They won't.

(Continued page 3)



RICH CASSIDY LAW
LAWYERS FOR PEOPLE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

RC Law in the Community	2
Summer Cherry Recipe	2
Sophie Ann Makes Friends.....	3
Poem by Amanda Lee	4
Remote Notarization	4
Other Risks	5
Home Thoughts	5

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Risky Times
- Puggle Dexter turns 13!
- Hoard Kindness

THANK YOU




We thank you, our dear clients, friends, and colleagues, for adjusting with us as we figure out our new normal. We are thrilled to be back in the office while taking all precautions necessary to keep our RCL family and clients safe and healthy. While we are still conducting most business electronically, we are seeing clients in person on an as-needed basis. See page 5 for our current office procedures.

We hope you are all safe and well as you navigate your new normal.

IN EACH ISSUE, WE WILL FEATURE A DIFFERENT NON-PROFIT THAT IS MEANINGFUL TO OUR FIRM AND THE COMMUNITY. THIS SEASON WE APPLAUD THE TIRELESS WORK OF VERMONT FOODBANK



Each quarter, Rich Cassidy Law supports a non-profit which represents great need or has a particular relationship to us. When our friends at * led an effort to raise significant money for the Vermont Food Bank, we joined that effort. As we watched our state's residents substantially affected from loss inflicted by the pandemic, we felt our dollars should go to feeding those whose need was so great.

Food insecurity is up 33% in Vermont according to University of Vermont research. One in 4 people struggles with hunger in our state. The mission of the Vermont Foodbank is "To gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships so no one in Vermont will go hungry." In the past year, the Foodbank has provided nourishment for over 153,000 people. We are glad to be a part of their extraordinary work.

*Rich serves as a Legal Analyst for 



Rich Cassidy Law also made a gift to the Vermont Bar Foundation to help fund the Vermont Poverty Law Fellowship and Access to Justice Campaign. The fellows involved in this effort work to increase legal access to low-income Vermonters. This includes helping clients find housing and address mental health issues.



Here's a recipe Courtney made with tart cherries from the cherry tree in front of Matt and Courtney's home. It is adapted from a Julia Child recipe.



Step 5, before adding the remaining batter. Fortunately Courtney had a bag of frozen cherries from last summer so she could share this recipe with you just in time for cherry season.



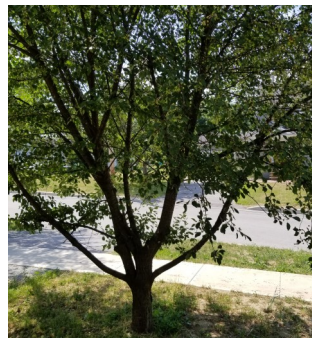
Finished clafoutis. Delicious with whipped cream, vanilla ice cream, or as is. Enjoy!

2

TART CHERRY CLAFOUTIS

Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 C milk
- 2/3 C sugar, divided
- 3 eggs
- 1 Tbsp vanilla
- 1/4 Tsp salt
- 1/2 C sifted flour
- 3 C tart cherries, pitted and drained—defrosted if previously frozen
- Powdered sugar for garnish



Here is the generous cherry tree. Last year Courtney and Matt picked (and pitted) over 50 lbs. of fruit, even with an abundance landing on the ground.

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Blend the milk, 1/3 C sugar, eggs, vanilla, salt, and flour for one minute.
3. Lightly butter a pie pan. Pour a 1/4 inch layer of the batter to cover the bottom of the pan. Reserve the rest of the batter.
4. Bake for approximately 10 minutes until the layer of batter begins to set but is not yet baked through. Remove from oven.
5. Evenly distribute the cherries over the set batter in the pie dish. Sprinkle the remaining sugar over the cherries, then pour in the remaining batter.
6. Bake for 45-60 minutes until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. The clafoutis will have puffed and turned brown.
7. Sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve warm or at room temperature. It is normal for the center of the clafoutis to sink when removed from the oven.

SOPHIE ANN MAKES FRIENDS

By Becky Cassidy



Sophie and some of her friends

Sophie, lovingly brought into the world, has never experienced unkindness, cruelty, or neglect. Born on a farm in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, she was enveloped in love from her first breath. In the year she has resided with us, she has grown in every way and most of all in love.

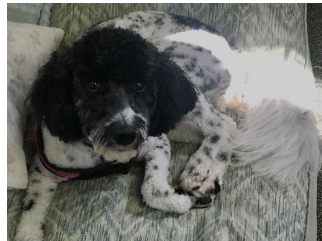
So, Rich and Sophie play with every dog and talk with every pet parent about topics complicated and uncomplicated. The parents no longer share physical smiles, as they can't be seen through their masks, though it is indeed true that "the eyes have it" and a smile reflected in any age eye is to be treasured. The human talk ranges from predictions of a nice or stormy weekend ahead to the astonishing and unexpected pandemic and tragic and shameful recent news. The dogs, ignorant of any angst, romp about welcoming each newcomer as they join their unchoreographed joy.

"You have to be taught to hate." Those lyrics, penned in the 1940's by Oscar Hammerstein and sung in the famed musical, "South Pacific," would not mean anything to the neighborhood dogs whose universal acceptance into their playful circle is a given. Theirs is a world populated by loving humans and friendly canine companions. The pandemic has little affect on animals, aside from the joys of having their people home more, and the worldly concerns of their human caregivers have seemingly minimal impact. Their natural inclination is to be trusting, loving, playful, and accepting. May we humans follow their example.

Early each morning Sophie Ann, our beloved mini golden doodle, now 16 months old, and her Daddy (known to humans as Rich) head out for their early walk. Though it is a necessity, it is also a joyful frolic for man and dog alike. Up the hill they go in eager anticipation of the first friend they will meet for ball-throwing and conversation. Both are social beings and look forward to quick hellos and more extended chats.

The affect of both Sophie and Rich is genuine and positive. They want to see old friends. They want to make new friends. A variety of dogs come their way, all shapes, sizes, and colors. Sophie's joy is apparent as each new dog is spotted. "Will you run with me? Will you chase the ball with me? Will you sniff me too?"

Here's a closeup of Sophie taken after her first grooming since January.



PRACTICING LAW DURING A PANDEMIC

(Continued from Page 1)

I don't mean to suggest that that every change that we are seeing now will be permanent. But by engaging in this massive test, we will learn what works and what doesn't, what's efficient and what isn't, and we will probably decide — or you, our clients, will decide for us — that many of the in-person practices of the past are not essential.

So yes, we're headed to a new normal that will be considerably different from the recent past. How much change we will ultimately experience is not clear, but it won't be small. And of course, law practice is just an example of change we will see through our economy and our culture.

Time to Adjust

Some lawyers will not feel up to the task of adjusting. They will likely find that they have become anachronisms. Some will have to have help to do the basics. Some will retire. Some will be retired.

That will not happen at Rich Cassidy Law. You can count on receiving the expert and full up to date service we are proud to deliver. We're here when you need us. Stay safe. Be well.

-Rich

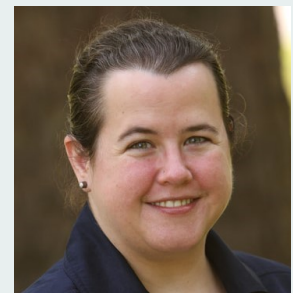
OUR FIRM:



Founding Attorney Richard Cassidy



Associate Attorney Matthew Shagam



Associate Attorney Amanda Lee



Office Staff (L-R)

Linda Jackman - Business Manager

Becky Cassidy - Marketing and Community Relations Director

Courtney Seale - Administrative Assistant

REMOTE DOCUMENT NOTARIZATION

By Amanda Lee



Life has changed in many unexpected ways these past few months, and all of us have found ourselves needing to adapt the way we do things.

Lawmakers have also acknowledged that sometimes life's circumstances require legal requirements to be adjusted as well. They have worked to come up with solutions to some of the problems that have arisen out of the pandemic.

One such issue is document notarization. There are many legal documents that require the presence of a notary to witness and verify oaths and signatures. Traditionally notaries have to be physically present with the person signing or making the oath in order to witness it and notarize the document.

The Vermont legislature passed a law that allows for "remote notarization," and many may be wondering how this would work. You would need to contact a Vermont notary public, (we have four at our office currently,) and talk about what you need to have notarized. The notary public will schedule a videoconference using a tool like the Zoom app and will send you the information on the video conference.

One important thing to note is that both you and the notary public have to be physically located in Vermont at the time the document is signed, or the oath is witnessed. Another critical thing to note is that the entire videoconference session must be recorded, with the cameras being adjusted as needed to make sure any and all signatures are recorded, and kept on file by the notary public for at least seven years. If you need documents notarized, we are here to help.



Our attorneys are talented in many ways. Amanda Lee shares this poem she wrote while attending Vermont Law School during the aftermath of Hurricane Irene. It is a poem of uncertainty and hope, relevant then as it is now.

AFTER THE RAIN

By Amanda Lee

The world as we know it is gone
new life grows through rotten floors.
Our world may end, but life grows on.

Over saturated the lawn
couldn't absorb the rain more.
The world as we know it is gone.

Down the banks the water ran on
until it overwhelmed the shores.
Our world may end, but life grows on.

Up the river rose, danger dawned,
torrents unleashed, destruction roared,
the world as we know it is gone.

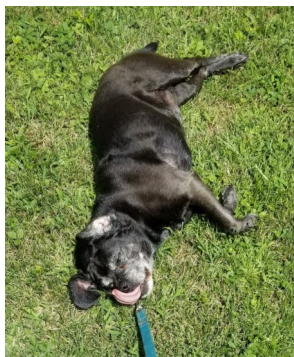
Roads, cars, homes, so much lost, withdrawn
downstream, rubble forevermore.
Our world may end, but life grows on.

Water receded, clean-up dawned;
community strengthened through chores.
The world as we know it is gone.
Our world may end, but life grows on.

PUGS' CORNER DEXTER TURNS 13 AND FINDS HIS VOICE

(MATT AND COURTNEY ARE PARENTS TO TWO PUGGLES, DEXTER AND GIA)

By Courtney Seale



Dexter taking a break to roll in the grass during a walk.

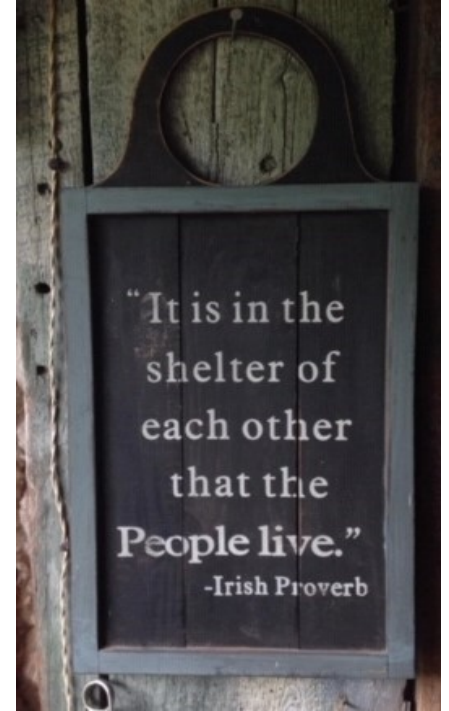
On May 13th, Dexter turned 13. November marks 8 years since Dexter came to live with me in Vermont and introduced me to the goofy, joyous love of a puggle. I write this at 4:30 in the morning. Why is that? Because Dexter seems to have realized that he was entering his septuagenarian decade in human years when January arrived, and his demanding, stubborn beagle tendencies have come out in full force.

My once lazy puggle has now decided that my wakeup call for his breakfast is between 4 and 6 am each morning, his choice at random. On the days that Dexter's whining doesn't wake me up, Gia helps by trying to jump up onto our bed so I am awakened by "scratch, scratch, scratch, plop." (She is too short to reach our low, platform bed without help). As soon as I reach down to pick her up, Dexter sees me move and starts howling until I get out of bed and we parade downstairs in a bouncy, noisy queue. I initially thought maybe he needed a potty break so outside we would go at all hours. This was a mistake because Dexter would start carrying on outside for our whole neighborhood to hear, letting me know he needed to eat and not relieve himself.

Dexter's new demands do not stop there. If he wants my seat on the sofa, he will go to another room and bark. When I get up to see what the problem is, he runs to occupy my seat. If I am resting and he wants my pillow, he whines and puffs his hot dog breath in my face letting me know he needs that exact soft spot. Dexter is also a creature of habit. If anyone -- myself, Matt, the electrician-- stands near the cabinet where we keep his food, he howls to let us know he wants another meal. We should not be standing there unless it is to fill his bowl.

I have taken Dexter to the vet to be sure there is nothing internal going on related to his new needs. There isn't, he has just decided that he is going to live out the rest of his life exactly as he pleases. Despite the lack of sleep, I am honored to be the one to indulge him.

NOTE FROM A CLIENT



"That is how I felt following my first conversation with Rich, which is why I sent it to him."

- A Grateful Client

BE CONSCIOUS OF OTHER RISKS

By Rich Cassidy

In our “New Normal,” there are many places beside the obvious where we can get hurt. It makes sense to keep your home in good repair, to look around for potential safety hazards, and to take steps to correct any that you find.

And believe it or not, texting while walking has become a major cause of injury!

Next, look around your workplace. While significant changes have been made to in-person offices, other dangers may lurk. Are there hazards that should be fixed? Tell the boss. If no action is taken, tell VOSHA, the Vermont Office of Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, the federal equivalent. The law provides whistleblower protection for good faith reports.

Be careful about your health care. In addition to monitoring yourself for Covid-19, do some research to be sure your doctor is a good one. You may be shocked to learn that a recent study shows that one in four Americans have suffered injury due to a medical error.

Read your own medical records. You may find important errors and, left uncorrected, an error could mean that you get the wrong treatment. You have a right under HIPAA, the (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) to get your record corrected. If you make a request, your record should contain both your request and your doctor’s response.

The business of a personal injury lawyer is to get the client compensation for injuries. But the truth is the money is never enough. Any experienced personal injury attorney knows this. If you can avoid being harmed in the first place, that’s the best thing. Keep your eyes open and take care of yourself and your loved ones.

HOME THOUGHTS—HOARD KINDNESS

By Becky Cassidy



Image courtesy of the U.N.

When trouble comes, people rise or fall. Covid-19 has impacted every one of us. We fragile humans can still make choices about loving or hating. Though the pandemic hangs as a significant and continuing threat around us, we retain the ability to choose.

The grocery store provides a great moving picture showing how we are responding to a world turned on its axis and spinning out of control. We disinfect our carts before we enter the store. We shun the friendly greetings to employees, friends and neighbors. The mission: Get in, grab as much as you want or need and more, and get out. Do not browse, don’t chit chat, don’t pause in the bread aisle and listen to a friend in need. But, you

could. Masked and gloved, you could take a moment to be kind. I had to.

This week, I watched as a woman two people ahead of me at the checkout rifled through her purse for change when the bill exceeded her resources. The young cashier was sympathetic but started removing items from the lady’s bags. Then suddenly the man behind her in line handed her a \$20 bill and her face caved to grateful tears. His wasn’t a gesture which conveyed, “Hurry up. Get out of my way.” It was an act of kindness. And doubters would speculate that she was somehow angling for this response. I would not be among them.

A trip up the paper goods and cleaning aisles confirms that toilet paper is back on the shelves, but you’ll have to settle for minimal cleaning supplies if any. How much can you clean? An acquaintance told me she had enough Lysol and Clorox wipes to last 5 years. And she said it proudly. Meanwhile some older friends stand at the store door at 7 a.m. (senior hours) in hopes of garnishing one container of wipes. Selfishness is a thin emotion.

So, here’s to those who rise. Here’s to the man who gave \$20. Here’s to the people who still wish you a friendly “Good Morning!” Here’s to the people volunteering to help in whatever way they can to ease the pain of so many others. Most of all, here’s to the doctors, nurses, first responders and essential workers who don’t have time to think if they have Lysol wipes at home.

Hoard kindness.



Do all you can to stack the odds in your favor when it comes to risk in all aspects of life.

CURRENT RICH CASSIDY LAW OFFICE PROCEDURES

At Rich Cassidy Law we continue to actively counsel and advocate for our clients and take on new clients.

We are happy to be working from the office again!

Most of our communications with clients, opponents, and the Courts are by digital means: phone, email, and video conference. If in-person meetings are necessary, they can be scheduled. Social distancing will be maintained and all parties will wear masks. We will provide disposable masks if needed.

In-person meetings may be conducted under the following conditions:

1. No one may enter this office without an appointment;
2. No one may enter this office experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness, i.e. fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath;
3. No one may enter this office unless wearing a mask covering nose and mouth; and
4. You must continue to wear such a mask while in the office.

If you wish to arrange a conference, please call or email. Our phone number is 802-864-8144.

Thank you.



RICH CASSIDY LAW

Our firm represents people, not businesses or institutions. We focus on personal injury litigation and employment law. We represent people who have been injured due to the fault of others, and employees in disputes with their employers or former employers.

Justice is not given; it is achieved. Without help from a competent, experienced lawyer, you may get nothing, or you may get whatever pittance the insurance companies or employers choose to give you. We offer the very best legal counsel, advice and support available. The experienced staff at Rich Cassidy Law will assist you from the time you contact us through the conclusion of your case. You can count on being treated humanely and courteously throughout the course of your time as our client.



Rich Cassidy Law
1233 Shelburne Road
Suite D5
South Burlington, VT 05403

Phone: 802-864-8144
Fax: 802-778-0510
E-mail: amanda@richcassidylaw.com

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