

Catalyst for change

Attorney works to improve health care delivery system

BY MEG BARONE

GREGORY PEPE '82 had planned to pursue a master's degree in fine art, but several work acquaintances and a passion for running combined to take him off his intended course and in the direction of law and medicine.

Pepe, a partner in the New Haven law firm Neubert, Pepe & Monteith, P.C., advocates for revisions to the health care system to make it fairer and more efficient for doctors and patients. On his own time, he works to improve the quality of life for AIDS patients.

Pepe focuses much of his legal work on health care law, representing medical societies and the state dental association. Last year his firm established NPM Legislative Services, a lobbying practice. "I lobby at the state Capitol on behalf of clients who are seeking changes in health care legislation. I hope to help make the delivery of health care more effective and of better quality in the state," Pepe said.

His firm represents several physician organizations in New Haven and Middlesex counties that are trying to better coordinate patient care through Web-based programs that would allow doctors to share patient information, such as clinical data and treatment protocols. "It will eliminate some of the redundancy and inefficiency that happens in health care...[and] lead to better quality and lower cost," Pepe said.

After graduating from Hamilton College in 1977 with a degree in English and minor in studio art, Pepe

pondered his next move. "What I really wanted to do was go to art school," he recalled.

He applied for and was accepted into an MFA program, but decided to take a job at his father's Bridgeport company for a year to pay off some college debt. The job allowed him to blend his artistic eye and business acumen as an office interior designer and furniture salesman.

There he met some people who were studying for the LSATs in preparation for law school. Pepe followed their lead, working for his father by day and studying law at night for four years at the former University of Bridgeport School of Law.

A friendship with Associate Dean David King led Pepe to part-time legal work in private practice upon graduation. The two avid runners met at lunchtime most days to run together, and King began referring zoning cases to Pepe. By 1988 he was practicing full time and in 1989, Pepe joined the law firm of Updike, Kelly & Spellacy, P.C., leaving in 1992 to form his current firm.

"Greg is not only a remarkable lawyer, but a real entrepreneur. He began as a solo practitioner, founded Neubert, Pepe & Monteith and has grown that firm to 24 lawyers. In this day and age, it's quite remarkable and commendable. It provides a model that many

young lawyers might want to consider," King said.

Pepe's reach extends beyond the state. His firm participates in the governance of the Physicians Foundation for Health Systems Excellence, a national foundation created from class action lawsuit settlements brought by doctors who sued large health care insurers. Like much of the work he does today, the lawsuits were aimed at leveling the playing field between doctors and managed care companies, so that both stakeholders could build a better working relationship.

"You name the health insurer in Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, North Carolina, and in other states, and we sued them. Our firm was instrumental in launching those lawsuits about 4½ years ago," he said.

Five of the insurers have settled, producing a fund in excess of \$100 million. "We're looking for ways to leverage that money so we can make a difference in the health care system," Pepe said. His experience dealing with the issues involved in the settlements broadened the scope of the work that comes to Pepe's firm. Today,

it serves as the national facilitator for disputes that arise out of the settlements with Anthem/Wellpoint and HealthNet, for all 700,000 physicians across the country.

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Pepe shares his enthusiasm for the legal and medical professions at the School of Law, where, for the last eight years, he has taught a course called The Law of Managed Care. He was a member of the former Dean's Advisory Board and received the Alumni Award for Public Service in 1999 from Quinnipiac.

Last summer, Pepe found time to renew his interest in printmaking, etching, lithography and drawing. Although Pepe had put aside his art for 25 years, he did not abandon the art

world altogether. He was a member of the inaugural board of directors for the International Festival of Arts & Ideas, an annual celebration of the arts in New Haven now in its 11th year that draws performers and artists from around the world.

He and his wife, Ann, have three children. All of them share Dad's love for art and his daughter, Leah, shows real artistic promise. Father and daughter took art courses together at the Creative Arts Workshop in New Haven last summer.

Pepe devotes other leisure hours to Leeway Inc., a 40-bed in-patient facility for people with AIDS in New Haven that he helped establish 13 years ago. He served for many years as president of its board, and continues to remain involved to this day.

"It is the only facility of its kind between New York City and Boston, devoted exclusively to people living with AIDS," Pepe said. "Of all my personal and professional accomplishments, it is perhaps the one of which I am the proudest."



Gregory Pepe '82 in his downtown New Haven office with some of his artwork.