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### The 4-Legged Heroes of Ground Zero

## HONORING THE CANINES OF 9/11

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, thousands of New Yorkers took to the streets to clear rubble, offer supplies, and search for survivors. It was a powerful act of resilience in a deeply trying time, and while most of the individuals helping with the disaster stood on two feet, more than 300 canines also answered the call to service.

Dogs of all breeds and backgrounds, including search and rescue dogs, police dogs, service dogs, and therapy dogs, were brought in to help find and care for survivors in the wake of the destruction. They worked tirelessly alongside rescue crews as they searched through the debris.

Search and rescue dogs and their handlers worked 12–16-hour days, searching for survivors and victims. They worked through dangerous conditions: Many dogs burned their paws as they dug through hot rubble, and both handlers and canines inhaled toxic

dust. The task was both physically and mentally exhausting for the dogs during their shifts. Some dogs that found deceased victims refused to eat or interact with other animals. Search and rescue dogs became increasingly stressed and depressed the longer they searched without any results, mirroring their handlers. It wasn't uncommon for handlers to stage mock "findings" of survivors to keep the dogs' spirits up.

Fortunately, the sacrifices these dogs and their handlers made did not go unnoticed. Many dog owners were inspired to earn their search and rescue certifications after the events of 9/11, promising to aid in future disasters and hopefully lessen the impact of such catastrophes.

After 9/11, various researchers conducted many studies examining the effect this kind of work has on animals, both physically and mentally. Many of these studies wouldn't be possible without the AKC Canine Health Foundation, so if you're looking to give back this September, visit them at their website to see how you can help: [AKCCHF.org](http://AKCCHF.org).

September/October 2019

## A LESSON IN EMPATHY

### How a Back Injury Made Me a Better Lawyer

**E**arly on in my law career, I wound up in a car accident that changed my outlook on life, both inside and outside the courtroom. At the time, I thought the accident was minor. I was 28 years old, and I had swerved off the road and hit the cement foundation of a flagpole at around 20 miles per hour. Because I was trying to hit the brakes during the impact, my right leg was jammed into my pelvis, but it wasn't a major injury. I thought my back was fine, but it turned out I'd injured two of my spinal discs — a problem that haunted me for decades.

The initial trauma of the accident caused instability in my SI joint, which led me to develop a funny walk. Over time, walking oddly took a toll on the injured discs in my back. It created massive discomfort, and I started seeking treatment from professionals. I saw a chiropractor, an orthopedic surgeon, and a physical medicine specialist, and I had steroid injections to ease the pain. Because I was considered too young for a risky back surgery, that pain was chronic.

Continuing my work while also dealing with my injury was incredibly challenging. I had been athletic up until that point but was so frustrated by the pain that I stopped working out, which was the worst thing I could have done. My muscles started to atrophy, and it made the whole situation worse. Eventually, out of desperation, I took books on CrossFit and Pilates to a PT teacher I knew through my casework. I asked him, "Can I do any of this without injuring myself further?" He recommended Pilates and told me which exercises were safe to try.

That conversation set me back on the path toward a normal life. After three weeks, I started seeing

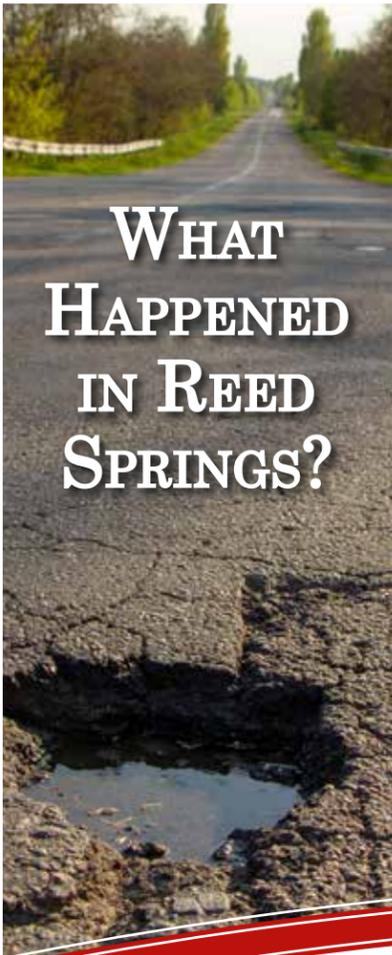
muscle tone coming back. After six, I noticed a reduction in pain. Finally, I got to the point where, even though I never forgot my injury was there, my symptoms had eased enough to allow me to get back to a normal routine. I consider it a blessing from God that I unlocked this life-changing treatment by chance. Two decades after my accident, I'm still a devotee of Pilates. I work out two or three times per week and often recommend it to my clients (though with the stipulation I'm certainly not a doctor).

The one upside of all this has been that I bring an entirely new level of empathy, understanding, and dedication to my work. I know every back, knee, and shoulder is different, and some injuries can never truly be healed, but I feel a stronger connection to my clients now than I did before. I have a clear understanding of not only the physical problems that come with an injury, but also the psychological problems. Like many of my clients, I've experienced the anxiety, fear, and depression that sometimes comes with being unable to do things that used to be easy. I think sometimes God gives you something tough to deal with so you can better empathize with those around you. In my case, I had to learn to cope with my back injury, and that process helped me understand my clients and their struggles.

Today, at 47, I'm still dealing with my injury daily, and I've taken on the role of counselor as well as lawyer in my personal injury cases. I remind my clients that the dark place they're in when their case begins isn't the same place they'll be at the end. I get to be their cheerleader, helping them through the process and providing comfort and understanding. Ultimately, while I wish I'd never injured my back, opening that line of communication has been a blessing, and I know I'm a better lawyer because of it.

*-Gary Christmas*





# WHAT HAPPENED IN REED SPRINGS?

## HOW A SMALL TOWN WENT BANKRUPT OVER A POTHOLE

In 2002, the quaint town of Reed Springs, Missouri, declared bankruptcy. The hard decision came after the town was forced to pay \$100,000 to Sally Stewart, a woman who sued Reed Springs after she tripped over a pothole during a shopping trip. News of a greedy woman ruining a small village to make a quick buck sparked outrage across the country. But Stewart wasn't the real villain of this story. A little digging into this case reveals a much deeper conspiracy.

Stewart had been visiting Reed Springs in 1998 when she tripped on a pothole hidden beneath some overgrown grass on the sidewalk. But this was no small stumble. Stewart tore two ligaments in her ankle and had to undergo surgery. To help pay for the medical bills, Stewart, who'd never sued anyone before, initially filed a personal injury lawsuit against the owners of the store in front of the pothole. However, the Missouri Court of Appeals determined the city of Reed Springs was liable for Stewart's injuries.

The court ordered Reed Springs to pay Stewart \$100,000, over half the city's annual budget. Despite the high price tag, in normal circumstances, this verdict wouldn't have forced Reed Springs to declare bankruptcy because the town's insurance would have covered the bill. Unfortunately, at the time of Stewart's accident, the mayor of Reed Springs was a corrupt man named Joe Dan Dwyer.

Dwyer left office while being investigated for insurance fraud, child pornography, statutory rape, witness bribery, and perjury, and he was later sentenced to seven years in federal prison. Among his many indiscretions, Dwyer also let the town's insurance policy lapse. Reed Springs didn't have insurance when Sally Stewart got hurt, which is why they had to write a check out of their own budget and ultimately declare bankruptcy.

In this case, what started as a simple pothole accident quickly unveiled the lasting damage of an unscrupulous politician. Perhaps this case serves as reminder about why it's important to vote in local elections.

# A SEASON TO STAY SAFE

## TIPS TO AVOID COLLISIONS DURING SOUTH CAROLINA'S FALL MOTORCYCLE RALLIES

Thanks to cooler temperatures and quieter roads, fall in South Carolina is the perfect season for motorcycle rallies, rides, and other bike-focused events. September and October boast the South Carolina State CMA Rally, the H-D Greenville Bike Nite, the Dragstravaganza race, Myrtle Beach Bike Week, and the Blood and Steel Rodeo Revival, just to name a few.

If you're planning to ride your bike to one of these fall festivals, it's time to come up with strategies for staying safe en route. According to the Governor's Highway Safety Association, there were 5,286 motorcycle fatalities in the U.S. in 2016, the second highest number in the past two decades. Clearly, you can never be too careful behind the handlebars, so when you set off, keep these things in mind:

### Wear a Helmet

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that motorcycle helmets saved an

estimated 1,859 lives in 2016 and could have saved 802 more if every biker wore them. So, set aesthetics aside this season, and invest in protection.

### Signal Religiously

On a motorcycle, broadcasting your intentions to the cars around you when you're turning or switching lanes is an essential component of staying safe. If you need to brush up on your hand signals, the Motorcycle Legal Foundation's website is an excellent resource.

### Stay on High Alert

Motorcycles are small enough to be nearly invisible on roadways and have a tendency to slip into drivers' blind spots. With that in mind, keep an eye on the cars around you, and make defensive driving your default mode.

Unfortunately, even if you do everything in your power to stay safe, it's impossible to control the other drivers. Often, other motorists do not see motorcycles and regard



them as an irritation or don't give them the respect they deserve. If you end up in an accident because of another driver, don't hesitate to give us a call. Christmas Law Firm's motorcycle accident lawyers know how to protect your rights and aggressively pursue the compensation you're entitled to in Charleston, including medical expenses, lost wages or income, property damage to your bike, and redress for pain and suffering.

## CHRISTMAS LAW FIRM GIVES BACK

### JOIN US IN FIGHTING THE OPIOID CRISIS

Opioid addiction is no doubt one of the biggest struggles the U.S. is facing. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the overuse of opioids in this country has become a full-blown crisis, with more than 130 Americans dying from overdose every day. The problem is so widespread that few of us don't have a friend or family member whose life has been negatively impacted by opioids, and our team here at Christmas Law is no exception.

For years, Christmas Law Founder Gary Christmas has been a member of PILMMA, the Personal Injury Lawyers Marketing & Management Association. Kenneth L. Hardison, a senior partner at Hardison & Cochran and a good friend, created PILMMA. Unfortunately, last year Ken's son lost his battle with opioid addiction and passed away. To honor his memory and do his part to fight back against the opioid crisis, Ken started a charity called the Lawyers Against Drug Addiction Foundation, and this summer Christmas Law donated \$500 to the cause.



We believe it's important to raise awareness about the fact that it's not only people going through hard times or with questionable morals who end up reliant on opioids. These highly addictive drugs can hook anyone, from star athletes recovering from sports injuries to the sweet old lady next door. They're powerful drugs, and addiction to them is one of the hardest things to beat — many people have lost their lives in the attempt, and those still fighting deserve all the help we can offer.

Ken has assured us 100% of the \$500 we donated to LADAF will go toward making a difference, whether through education, treatment, or raising awareness. None of those funds will go toward administrative costs. If you have the means, please consider joining us in the fight against addiction. You can reach Ken today by calling PILMMA at 843-361-1700.

## PUZZLE



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|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>AUTUMN</b>      | <b>TOUCHDOWN</b>  |
| <b>APPLE</b>       | <b>HOMECOMING</b> |
| <b>SEPTEMBER</b>   | <b>HARVEST</b>    |
| <b>LABORDAY</b>    | <b>CIDER</b>      |
| <b>FOOTBALL</b>    | <b>LEAVES</b>     |
| <b>QUARTERBACK</b> | <b>SWEATER</b>    |



## Basil Berry Sorbet

Inspired by Good Housekeeping

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- 6 cups frozen mixed berries
- 3/4 cup fresh lemon juice

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a saucepan over high heat, combine sugar with 1 cup of water, stirring occasionally until sugar dissolves, creating a syrup-like consistency.
2. Remove syrup from heat, add basil, cover, and let stand for 15 minutes. Strain syrup into bowl and refrigerate until cold.
3. In a blender, combine syrup with frozen berries and lemon juice. Purée until smooth.
4. Transfer to a square baking pan, cover in plastic wrap, and freeze until set, about 2 hours.
5. Scoop and serve.