

In several headline-making lawsuits, Heather A. Begley, 32, was a key player on the legal team for the plaintiffs.

Other lawyers say Begley deserves a big part of the credit for a \$38.3 million verdict in 2004. A Cook County jury awarded the money to a Wisconsin woman and her son, who had been injured in a 15-vehicle pile-up on Interstate 90 near Rockford. The woman's 4-year-old girl was killed in the accident.

"Heather worked tirelessly," says Robert R. Duncan, who worked with her on the case. "She literally set the pace for many of the other attorneys working on the case, being the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave at night, making sure everything was set for the next day. Throughout the case, she spotted issues, weighed in on strategic and legal decisions, and helped shape the case."

At the time, Begley was working for the Clifford Law Offices, where she spent seven years. In 2007, she joined the Law offices of Jeffrey J. Kroll, she worked with Jeffrey when he was a partner at Clifford. In the past three years at the Law Offices of Jeffrey J. Kroll, Heather has been involved with successful resolution of cases totaling in excess of 10 million dollars.

Duncan (who is now at Boudreau & Nisivaco) says the Rockford-accident lawsuit also showed Begley's skills at making strong personal connections with her clients.

"Heather always had time to explain to the plaintiffs what was going on, why it was necessary, and how it fit into the case," Duncan says. "She was also there to comfort and console the plaintiffs throughout the trial on their unimaginable loss."

Begley has also handled several Metra train cases and the 1999 Bourbonnais Amtrak train-truck collision. And Begley and Kroll successfully tried the first case resulting from a 2006 CTA Blue Line derailment.

William G. Warshaw of Bruce Farrel Dorn & Associates, who has been Begley's legal adversary in some trials, says she's a formidable opponent in the courtroom. One reason is that she knows how to explain issues to jurors.

"She has the ability to take complex injuries and break them down into their component parts so that a jury easily understands them," Warshaw says. "While most attorneys examine witnesses in a stilted, 'lawyerly' style, Heather's tone and cadence presents the evidence in a colloquial style that puts the witness, and ultimately the jury, at ease."

Another lawyer who has opposed Begley in court, Gregory T. Glen of Prusik Selby Daley & Kezelis, says Begley questioned her clients in a way that built sympathy for them.

"As a result of Heather's strategy, her client became sympathetic in the eyes of the insurance adjuster and now has a secure college education fund," Glen says.

Begley, who graduated from DePaul University College of Law, won the William J. Harte Amicus Volunteer Award from the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association in 2005. She lives in the south suburbs with her husband and two children.

Colleagues praise her intellectual skills. "She has a grasp of malpractice litigation that an attorney of her age does not possess," says an attorney client, who has hired Begley to work on a medical malpractice case. "Ms. Begley is able to fully prepare and take physicians' depositions in an efficient and methodical manner."

Begley is such an effective attorney that she may strike fear now in some of the lawyers opposing her in court — Warshaw calls her "a formidable adversary" — but she has also earned their respect.

"When assigned to a case where Heather Begley is opposing counsel, you know the case will move forward without the typical games and irritations that typically exist between firms and opposing counsel during the course of litigation," Glen says.

One attorney who has referred cases to Begley she says has "a compassionate and caring personality."

This attorney says, "Being a lawyer is more than a job for Ms. Begley; it is a calling."



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32

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Law Offices of Jeffrey J. Kroll
10 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 3702
Chicago, IL 60603
T 312.676.7222

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