

Pro Bono

Pro Bono Partnership Honors Nine Attorneys, Corporations

In celebration of a decade of pro bono legal assistance to more than 1,100 Connecticut, New York and New Jersey nonprofit organizations, the Pro Bono Partnership has honored nine corporations and attorneys for their outstanding commitment to the Partnership and its clients over the past 10 years.

Nearly 300 attorneys, supporters and clients gathered for a gala reception at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in New York City on March 13 to celebrate the Partnership's accomplishments and to recognize the recipients of the Partnership's First Decade Awards for pro bono service.

Extraordinary Service Awards were presented to General Electric Company, represented by Senior Vice President and General Counsel Brackett B. Denniston III, and to Toni Anne Nichels, employment & HR counsel, Xerox Corporation.

Honored with Distinguished Service Awards were Honeywell International, Inc. (Peter M. Kreindler, senior vice president and general counsel); Prudential Financial (Susan L. Blount, senior vice president and general counsel); Schering-Plough Corporation (Thomas Sabatino Jr., executive vice president and general counsel), and attorneys Leonard D. Andrew, retired associate general counsel, IBM Corporation; Lee Braem, senior corporate counsel and deputy compliance officer, Evonik Degussa Corporation; Susan Corcoran, Jackson Lewis LLP, and Anahaita Kotval, managing director and general counsel, RBS Greenwich Capital.

"It seems like yesterday that I met with Bob Healing, corporate counsel at GE, and other leaders from the Westchester Fairfield Corporate Bar Fund to create a program that would engage in-house corporate attorneys in pro bono work on behalf of local nonprofit organizations," said Rick Hobish, the Partnership's executive director. "Responding to the call to provide free legal assistance to local nonprofits, many leaders in the corporate legal community quickly embraced the Partnership's mission and encouraged their legal staffs to take on pro bono projects."

General Electric has been the most pivotal and influential force since the Partnership's inception. In 1997, with the encouragement and support of then General Counsel Ben Heineman, Mr. Healing conceptualized a program to tap into the wealth of talent represented by corporate legal departments. The two championed participation by GE's large in-house legal staff and led the way in sustaining and expanding the Partnership in its early years. Mr. Denniston has continued in this tradition with enthusiasm and is widely recognized as a leader in promoting pro bono service.

Honeywell, Prudential and Schering-Plough advocated for the Partnership's expansion to New Jersey in 2000. Their financial and programmatic support has facilitated that program's success. They have provided the Partnership, not only with funding, but with active board members and numerous volunteers. "Most importantly," says Hobish, "they have set an example for other corporations and law firms, many of which now



Brackett B. Denniston, III, Senior Vice President & General Counsel, General Electric Company, accepting Pro Bono Partnership's 1st Decade Award for Extraordinary Service.

participate in the New Jersey program."

Ms. Nichels is the Partnership's most prolific volunteer. She has handled dozens of employment-related issues, the area of greatest client demand for assistance. Not only is Ms. Nichels regularly available for client matters, but she also provides invaluable institutional support to the Partnership, championing its relationship with Xerox, where she is the Pro Bono Coordinator, and encouraging other employment lawyers in the region to get involved. Ms. Nichels has been the featured presenter at more than a dozen Partnership workshops on employment issues. She particularly enjoys the workshops because they give her the ability to help a large number of organizations at one time.

Mr. Andrew, Mr. Braem, Ms. Corcoran and Ms. Kotval are also notable for the breadth and depth of their commitment. Mr. Andrew, now retired from IBM, has volunteered hundreds of hours to handle complicated matters, conducted outreach to numerous clients engaged in important community work and is the primary editor of the Partnership's online Employment Law Manual, a comprehensive resource on employment issues. "I would encourage others approaching retirement to continue to use their skills by volunteering with the Partnership," Mr. Andrew said. "It will sharpen your mind."

Mr. Braem also is President of the New Jersey Corporate Counsel Association and a board member of the Environmental Law Section of the New Jersey State Bar Association. He has been one of the Partnership's most active volunteers since the New Jersey program started. He has provided counsel to more than 20 organizations and seeks out new clients without waiting to be asked. "Lee is always willing to take on the most complicated and time-consuming projects," Mr. Hobish said.

Ms. Corcoran was one of the Partnership's first volunteers and has been one of its most committed pro bono attorneys ever since. The Partnership particularly appreciates Corcoran's willingness to make herself available to clients in immediate need of counsel, a common occurrence when employment

issues arise. Ms. Corcoran also serves as a resource to the Partnership's in-house legal staff and represents many nonprofit organizations addressing the needs of children and families.

Since 2001, Ms. Kotval has handled 25 matters for Partnership clients that provide affordable housing, economic

development and health services. My Sister's Place, an organization assisting victims of domestic violence, has become her special project, however, and in 2007, she joined their board. Instead of spending money on legal fees, "I'd rather see them spend money helping battered women," Ms. Kotval said.

Ben Heineman Emphasizes Need For Pro Bono Efforts By Lawyers

Benjamin W. Heineman, Jr., Senior Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and former Senior Vice President and General Counsel, General Electric Company, delivered the following remarks on March 13 at the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of The Pro Bono Partnership at the offices of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP in New York City.



Benjamin W. Heineman, Jr.

It is quite remarkable to see hundreds of Pro Bono Partnership supporters at this event tonight. And hard to believe that 10 years ago, we started with just an idea and not much more. I want to single out Bob Healing, GE's corporate counsel for many years, for seeing the need and having the vision. And I want to thank the fantastic staff at the Partnership for giving that vision life – because, while it is great to have hundreds here tonight to celebrate, what is really important, ultimately, is the hundreds of corporate lawyers who have participated in the program helping thousands in our community through the efforts of those who work at the Partnership.

In a moment, I want to make very brief remarks about why pro bono work is a pillar of professional development – why it adds value to the lives of those who do it.

But first I want underscore the fundamental principle that pro bono lawyering really is an obligation for all of us who believe we practice a noble profession. The profound words on the facade of the Supreme Court Building – "Equal Justice Under Law" – really do speak to us all. We cannot realize that ideal of equal justice unless those who do not have means are provided with the highest quality legal service. So all of us in this room – all of us in this profession – have a solemn duty to make sure that happens.

Now, why do I say pro bono work is a pillar of professional development?

Let me first address this question from the perspective of young lawyers who begin their careers as public interest or public service lawyers. Because the Latin phrase "pro bono publico" means for the public good, these lawyers are surely, in an important sense, pro bono lawyers. Given the structure of our profession, public interest or public service lawyers often have extraordinary responsibility early in their careers – often with supervision from very wise and savvy veterans. Their experience in

interviewing, preparing, taking testimony, writing briefs, arguing motions, dealing directly with clients, addressing big public policy issues is often a wonderful foundation for professional development which dramatically exceeds the experience of law firm associates of comparable age.

Because of these extraordinary opportunities for early responsibility and accountability in pro bono work, law firms should make pro bono lawyering a larger and better organized aspect of young associates' lives – as much as 20-30 percent. As I discuss in a recent article, "The Lost Generation" – which appeared in *The American Lawyer* and *Corporate Counsel* – law firms today are not offering young associates systematic mentoring and professional development and, all too often, are just running up the hours by putting high priced young lawyers on grudge work. This is why so many are leaving the big firms of their own volition at the three or four year mark. Giving these associates terrific real experience through a thoughtfully conceived and executed pro bono program would be great for them, for the firms and for those in need.

Finally, pro bono work is of great importance to the professional development of lawyers inside corporations. I consider involvement in one's community to be an important part of professional development – and sometimes such involvement is difficult for corporate lawyers working on their gated campuses in the sylvan suburbs. Pro bono lawyering gets corporate lawyers "out of the office" in the best sense of that phrase. Moreover, working in the community, with a diverse clientele and looking at matters within a lawyer's specialty from a very different perspective, is important for corporate lawyers increasingly called upon to deal with problems all over the world. I don't think it is a stretch to say that inside lawyering requires tremendous sensitivity to diverse people, not just to other lawyers. Working at the community organization on environment or tax or employment or litigation issues – rather than meeting other lawyers in conference rooms at headquarters or mid-town – is invaluable.

Anyway, these are just a few thoughts on why pro bono lawyering is so important to the professional development of us all.

But I want to end where I began: it is also so important because it is the right thing to do.

And that it is why I consider myself so privileged to be here tonight to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Pro Bono Partnership.