

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

Pro Bono SPOTLIGHT

Campaign for Justice 2011 coming soon

Now in its 25th year, the Campaign for Justice is one of the most successful civil legal service fundraising campaigns in the country. Proceeds from the annual phonathon fundraiser are distributed to three local legal services providers: Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County; Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, a division of Legal Assistance of Western N.Y.; and the Legal Aid Society of Rochester.

“The Campaign for Justice provides critical operating funds supporting civil legal services providers based in Monroe County,” Harold A. Kurland, co-chair of the 2011 campaign and a partner at Ward Greenberg Heller & Reidy LLP, said recently.



Kurland

Despite the challenges of the current economy, the campaign surpassed its goal of \$235,000 in both 2008 and 2009. In 2010, the CFJ came within \$1,000 of reaching an increased goal of \$240,000.

“The campaign’s success reflects the generosity of Rochester’s legal community and the partnership and collaboration of Rochester’s civil legal services providers,” said Thomas J. Mullin, 2011 campaign co-chair and executive vice president and general counsel at Constellation Brands Inc.

VLSP receives a substantial part of its budget from the Campaign for Justice. Now more than ever, the success of the campaign is vitally important to VLSP.

“Due to the economy, more people need and qualify for services,” Mullin said. “At the same time, state and federal funding have been cut.”

VLSP provides the majority of the staff support for the campaign although it receives staff assistance from the Legal Aid Society and Monroe County Legal Assistance Center. Each year, over 70 attorneys and judges also step up to volunteer as callers and runners. As the name implies, runners pick up pledge sheets from callers and bring them to the central tabulation area.

Many volunteers are members of local bar associations.

“The support of the Monroe County Bar Association, the

Rochester Black Bar Association and the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys is a well-established component of the CFJ,” Mullin said. “Volunteers come from all three organizations, which also publicize the CFJ at CLE programs and meetings and remind their members to make pledges.”

Those in the legal field understand firsthand the need for funding for civil legal services.

“Navigating our legal system is hard even when you have financial resources and access to fine legal representation. Imagine how hard it is when you have neither of those,” Kurland said. “Then add in language barriers, lack of employment, and often overwhelming personal, financial and medical problems. These are the clients of the civil legal services organizations.”

In addition to support from enthusiastic volunteers in the legal community, a festive atmosphere is another hallmark of the CFJ. Before calling begins, volunteers gather to share a meal, reconnect with old friends and make some new acquaintances.

Once calling begins, friendly competition breaks out among callers. Attorneys like to compete to see who can bring in the highest amount of pledges.

Thankfully, the Campaign for Justice is not a hard sell.

“Almost everyone who can be reached during our CFJ Phonathon contributes, usually increasing each year,” Kurland said. “Most lawyers in our area appreciate the importance of the campaign because they understand the need and they want to support it.”

Offering space for the CFJ once again this year are Kurland’s firm, Ward Greenberg Heller & Reidy LLP, and WXXI — both conveniently located on State Street in the heart of the High Falls District. Ward Greenberg will host evening calling Nov. 15 and 16, and WXXI will host daytime calling Dec. 6.

Recent innovations have made it easier than ever to support the CFJ. As in 2010, donations can be made online by visiting VLSP’s website at www.vlsprochester.org. Campaign supporters need not wait to be called and asked to pledge; they are welcome to donate online at their convenience.

Several new initiatives are planned for the 2011 campaign.

Continued ...



By LINDA KOSTIN
Daily Record
Columnist



Mullin

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Continued ...

"This year we will focus on using new technologies, social media, and email to supplement our telephone calls and make sure we reach out to donors as broadly and effectively as possible," Kurland said. "We also will reach beyond lawyers and law firms to ask corporations with law departments and those who regularly do business with lawyers to participate in the Campaign for Justice."

Co-chairs Kurland and Mullin will be assisted by the members of the 2011 Campaign for Justice Cabinet: Kelly Ross Brown, James P. McElheny and Donald W. O'Brien Jr., Woods Oviatt Gilman; Susan Schultz Laluk, Hiscock & Barclay; Barbara LaVerdi, Constellation Brands; Frank Novak, Harter Secrest; Carolyn G. Nussbaum and David M. Tennant, Nixon Peabody; Kari A. Smoker, SUNY Brockport; Karen Bailey Turner, Brown Hutchinson; Sharon E. Underberg, Eastman Kodak Co.; and Michael R. Wolford, The Wolford Firm.

Another fundraiser benefiting VLSP — the Art of Lawyering silent auction — is currently under way. Bidding continues through Nov. 16, the last evening of CFJ calling. Stop by during business hours to view the 130-plus items created by legal professionals and their friends and family.

The quality artwork offered includes photographs by Louis Ryen, prints by Sharon Stiller, metal garden sculptures by

John Wilson and Dory Driss, and a wooden sculpture entitled "Justice is ..." by the Hon. Gerard Alonzo.

Nancy Jurs, Larry Merrill, The Nan Miller Gallery and the Estate of Jacques Zuccaire are among the nationally known friends of local attorneys who have donated art for the silent auction.

VLSP thanks the members of the legal community who stepped up last month to help low-income clients with a wide range of issues including bankruptcies, wills, estates, tax, name changes, unemployment insurance benefits denials, grandparent/non-parent child custody disputes, and divorces as well as those who served as presenters for our Sept. 30 CLE entitled Wills, Health Care Proxies and Powers of Attorney and Standby Guardianship Proceedings in Surrogate's Court.

September 2011 honor roll

Judge: Gerard Alonzo (ret.).

Solo Practitioners: Betsy Album; Matthew Austin; Ann Blaise; Vanessa Brown Hanks; Robert Clark; Tina De Souza; Mab Fitz-Gerald; Phillip Hurwitz; Leann Michael; William Neild; Joy Ryen Plotnik; Michael Schnittman; Karen Smith Callanan; Robert Stiles; Laura Taylor.

Attorneys and paralegals at firms: Sheldon Boyce (Brenna Brenna and Boyce); Steven Carling (Burns & Schultz); paralegal Elsa Trotto (Faraci & Lange); Christopher Andreucci (Harris Beach); F.

Paul Greene, Diana Holl, John Jennings, Kristin Lowe (Harter Secrest & Emery); Susan Schultz Laluk (Hiscock & Barclay); David MacKnight (Lacy Katzen); Kristin Jonsson (Law Office of Timothy Peltiere); Margaret Clemens (Littler Mendelson); Richard Doe (Nacca & Capizzi); Adam Brunner, Barry Carrigan, Penny Dentinger, John Garrett, Jared Lusk, Richard Rochford, Meaghan Schubmehl (Nixon Peabody); Elizabeth Wolford, Michael Wolford (The Wolford Law Firm); R. Thompson Gilman (Woods Oviatt Gilman).

Corporate Attorneys and Paralegal:

Thomas Durkin (Allstate Insurance); Torger Dahl (Carestream Health); paralegal Patricia Carey (Thomson Reuters).

Government attorneys: Katherine Breitenbach, Sanjeev Devabhakthuni, Craig Peterson, Kim Taylor (Appellate Division, Fourth Department); Margaret Lavery (Monroe County Surrogate's Court).

Mediator: Robert Hauser (Center for Dispute Settlement).

Paralegal students: Carol Andrews, Jonathan Edwards, Lily Hughson, Jessica Montoya, Elyse Truax (Monroe Community College).

Web developer: Robert Kostin.

Linda Kostin is the pro bono coordinator at Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County Inc. Contact her at lkostin@wnylc.com or (585) 295-5703.