

# pro bono & community service NEWS

September 2010

## Chicago Attorneys Assist Seniors with Property Taxes

With help from Katten and a number of volunteer legal professionals, in 2009 the Cook County Assessor's Office and the Center for Disability & Elder Law reached out to approximately 1,200 seniors in danger of losing their homes due to delinquent property tax bills through the Senior Tax Opportunity Program (STOP). STOP volunteers counsel senior homeowners on the various countywide exemptions and programs available. Katten has been at the forefront in the development of STOP since its inception in 2007. On August 26, the firm hosted a training session for attorneys willing to help the estimated 1,700 seniors who are at risk of losing their homes in 2010. Dozens of law firms and corporate legal departments were represented among the trainees. Special counsel **Thomas Sweeney** (Real Estate), a volunteer who helped organize the program, said, "Annually, due to the time and efforts of dedicated volunteers, hundreds of senior citizens have been able to avail themselves of the program and avoid having their home sold at tax sales." Associate **Emily Litznerski** (Trusts and Estates) is also a volunteer.

## Katten, Pro Bono Client Honored by NYC

The Volunteers of Legal Service's (VOLS) Microenterprise Project was selected as a 2010 Neighborhood Achievement Award winner by the New York City Department of Small Business Services. VOLS' mission is to develop projects that provide pro bono civil legal services to benefit the poor in New York City. The organization was recognized along with other honorees at a ceremony hosted by New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Commissioner Robert W. Walsh at Gracie Mansion in July. Katten has played an important role in the success of the project, which provides pro bono legal assistance to low-income microentrepreneurs. Our New York attorneys provide guidance on intellectual property matters, including patent, trademark and copyright registrations, and also aid microentrepreneurs in designing optimal corporate structures. Intellectual Property Practice Co-Chair **Karen Ash** has served on the VOLS board of directors for the last three years, following the service of partner **Joshua Rubenstein** in this capacity. Karen, partner **David Pentlow** (Corporate) and associate **David Sherman** (Intellectual Property) are all pictured as featured VOLS participants on the 2010 Neighborhood Achievement Awards Program [website](#).

## Katten Advising Patent Pool on AIDS Drugs

Katten is working with [UNITAID](#), a UN-funded international facility for purchasing drugs hosted by the World Health Organization, and its Medicines Patent Pool Foundation to negotiate a patent pool for first-, second- and third-line AIDS/HIV drugs for developing countries. Earlier this month, partner **Jeffrey Hovden** (Intellectual Property, New York) attended a brainstorming meeting with licensing experts from around the world in Geneva, Switzerland, to work out the structure for the proposed pool, which would license patent rights for AIDS/HIV drugs to generic drug companies in an effort to make these drugs more widely available in the neediest parts of the world.



## Charlotte Attorneys Help Woman Out of Foreclosure

Charlotte Litigation Practice Chair **Richard Farley** and corporate partner **Victor Wray** represented a young, single woman in a foreclosure action brought against her. Richard negotiated a reinstatement of her loan and a waiver of all of the bank's legal fees, costs and late fees. The client, who is working two jobs to make ends meet, was extremely thankful for the outcome. "The mindless bureaucracy that people face in residential foreclosure actions would defeat most of us," said Victor. "Richard got through a mine field in two weeks that our client could not get through in four months."

## Katten Helping Unconditional Love Counter School Bullying

Under the direction of partner **Chuck Chejfec** (Litigation, Chicago), Katten is representing Unconditional Love, a nonprofit organization created to help schools develop anti-bullying programs, including educational films and training for school administrators, teachers and students. Bullying has become a major social epidemic—86% of children ages 12 to 15 report at least some form of bullying that has interfered with their studies. Yet there is often no adult or peer intervention, or that intervention is ineffective. Katten will assist Unconditional Love with a variety of legal needs related to furthering its mission to provide positive solutions to bullying in schools, including: researching and analyzing applicable laws; counseling parents regarding family rights; developing a bully/parent/school contract to conciliate bullying disputes; advising the organization about privacy/intellectual property issues in its development of educational materials and media activities; addressing corporate structuring issues; and coordinating with States Attorneys' Offices to enforce program and reporting requirements with school districts. Unconditional Love co-founder Marie Newman will be in the Chicago office on October 6 to make a presentation about the organization. Contact Chuck or Jonathan Baum for more information.

## Chicago Attorneys Come to Aid of Area Immigrants

Chicago litigation partner **Steven Bashwiner** and associate **Mark Magyar** won a significant victory for the procedural rights of immigrants in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. In cooperation with the National Immigrant Justice Center, they represented a woman who had emigrated from Nicaragua and was facing removal from the United States based on "fraudulent marriage" charges. The woman's husband, a U.S. citizen, claimed that our client had paid him \$1,000 to marry her so she could stay in the country. At a hearing, our client vigorously disputed the husband's assertions. She repeatedly asked the immigration judge to subpoena the husband so that he could be located and cross-examined about his statement, but the immigration judge refused and ultimately ordered her removal from the country. Katten took the case on appeal, and the Court of Appeals reversed the order of removal. In response to the immigration judge's argument that issuing a subpoena would not have been productive, Chief Judge Frank Easterbrook said, "A prediction that a person can't be found, or that cross-examination won't be fruitful, is a poor reason to deny a litigant the statutory entitlement to cross-examine adverse witnesses. The best way to find out whether a subpoena will work is to issue one."

Chicago litigation associates **Patrick Harrigan** and **Kathy Kottos**, and partner **Jenny Johnson**, won political asylum for a young woman from Guinea who was fleeing persecution in the form of female genital mutilation and a forced polygamous marriage to a government official. The team presented the testimony of seven expert and lay witnesses at a trial in immigration court and ultimately convinced the court that the client warranted a grant of asylum, despite being procedurally barred by first applying more than seven years after she arrived in the United States. Notably, the Department of Homeland Security took the rare step of waiving its right to appeal the decision, which enabled the client to immediately obtain asylee status and finally become eligible to work in the United States and to apply to graduate school. Litigation associates **Aaron Chandler**, **David Kerastas** and **Jessica Price** also assisted in the case, which was resolved after two and a half years.



## L.A. Partner Organizes Charity Bike Ride to Benefit LIVESTRONG

On September 26, partner and Los Angeles Litigation Practice Chair **Zia Modabber** and his cycling club held the Team Helen's 8th Wonder Cycling Challenge, a charity bike ride and family barbeque, in Malibu, California. All proceeds from the event, for which Katten served as a sponsor, will go to LIVESTRONG. "Virtually every single member of the club has had their own experience with cancer," said Zia. "We each have our own personal motivation to do something to fight the disease and support the efforts of LIVESTRONG. When we first envisioned the event, I must admit that we were a bit scared about how to pull it off. Now, the whole club is excited about how much money we hope to actually contribute to the cause." The group hopes to raise \$100,000 through registrations, donations and raffle tickets.

## Volunteer Your Time at Carpenter School

This academic year, Katten will continue its partnership with Philo Carpenter Elementary School, with opportunities for both attorneys and staff in the Chicago office to get involved. Philo Carpenter is an inner-city Chicago Public School that provides a standard curriculum and bilingual and special education programs for children in second grade through eighth grade. At this time we are looking for staff volunteers to visit Carpenter twice a month during their lunch break to tutor and read to students. We are also seeking lawyers and paralegals to assist with the Lawyers in the Classroom program. Volunteers for this project will teach students about the U.S. Constitution during the first semester, and prepare students for a mock trial, held in Katten's mock trial room, during the second semester. The students and teachers at Carpenter are very appreciative of the time that Katten employees give to work with the students, and every visit is a rewarding one. If you are interested in tutoring or reading to the students, or participating in the Lawyers in the Classroom program this year, contact staff attorney **Laura Waller** (Employment Law and Litigation) or paralegal supervisor **Keith Forrest** (Litigation).

### Volunteer Spotlight: Gail Semple

Charlotte secretary **Gail Semple** is passionate about making a difference—whether in her own community or half a world away. This year, Gail's volunteer service in the Charlotte community has included working as part of a team to make some much-needed improvements to the campus at a preschool that provides affordable child care for single and low-income parent households, and staffing an annual back-to-school giveaway day that provides thousands of underprivileged children and their families with everything they need to start school, at no cost. She also participated in remodeling a building from the ground up for a transitional housing program that will be home to four teen mothers who recently finished high school. Finally, this year Gail made her fifth outreach trip to South Africa, leading a group of 11 to the community of Soweto in Johannesburg, to help residents of the local squatter camps develop sustainable food gardens, and to deliver vitamins, clothes and shoes to preschool-age children there.

## Join the Next Generation of Civic Leaders in Chicago

The Chicago Community Trust's Young Leaders Fund is holding a recruiting event for new members Thursday, October 21, from 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the Haworth Showroom at the Merchandise Mart. The Young Leaders Fund provides professionals between the ages of 25 and 45 who want to invest in their community with an innovative way to make a difference. Members join by contributing \$750 to the endowment. As one of The Chicago Community Trust's six identity-based funds that direct grants to specific city populations, the Young Leaders Fund empowers its donors to manage the grant-making process—members pool their charitable dollars, then give grants to programs supporting change within their community, becoming more effective volunteers and more knowledgeable civic leaders in the process. To date, the Young Leaders Fund has given more than \$650,000 to over 150 entrepreneurial nonprofit organizations in metropolitan Chicago. For more information, please contact Kim Glowac at [kglowac@gmail.com](mailto:kglowac@gmail.com).

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Please send comments, suggestions and news about interesting pro bono cases and matters you've been involved with, as well as any non-legal community service work you're doing, to [jonathan.baum@kattenlaw.com](mailto:jonathan.baum@kattenlaw.com).

