

pro bono & community service NEWS

June 2011

Katten Launches New Veterans Project

In March, National Managing Partner **Vincent Sergi** put out a call to Katten attorneys in all the firm's U.S. offices to join in helping the thousands of young men and women coming home from serving in our wars overseas obtain the benefits to which their service and, in many cases, their grievous injuries, entitle them. The response has been tremendous. Eight Chicago office attorneys have volunteered, four of whom have already been trained by the Veterans Consortium *Pro Bono* Program and are awaiting case assignments. Attorneys in the Los Angeles and Washington offices who were already involved in veterans work through other agencies have been joined in their efforts by new colleagues. New York and Charlotte office attorneys are pursuing veterans benefits training opportunities online and through local bar associations. To join the Katten Veterans Project, contact **Jonathan Baum**.

Katten UK Attorneys Support Lending to Entrepreneurs in Developing Countries

In the first pro bono project for the London office, financial services attorneys **Carolyn Jackson** and **Nathaniel Lalone** are working with [MFX](#), a microfinance industry cooperative formed in 2008 to provide microfinance lenders with affordable and accessible hedging instruments and the know-how to better manage currency risks, supporting the microfinance industry's role in alleviating poverty in developing countries.



MFX serves microfinance investment funds and institutions that provide microfinance loans to microbusinesses in developing and newly industrialized countries. To manage its market risk, MFX fully offsets the foreign exchange risk from its clients via a matching hedge, generally a cross-currency swap, non-deliverable forward or foreign exchange forward, with a counterparty, which can be either the Currency Exchange Fund or a commercial bank.

Certain regulatory provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act could potentially impair the microfinance industry's ability to manage its currency risks. Carolyn and Nate are drafting on MFX's behalf comment letters to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Department of the Treasury in support of MFX's position that it should not be subject to the full level of regulation under Dodd-Frank, as certain regulations could have a dramatic negative effect on MFX's business as a provider of exotic currency hedging to the microfinance industry.

Settlement Achieved for L.A. Holocaust Museum

Los Angeles litigation partner **Harrison Dossick** and associate **Jarin Jackson** obtained a favorable settlement for the [Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust](#) in a long-running lease dispute with a former landlord. The museum had leased a temporary space for its exhibits while building a permanent facility. When a flood damaged the temporary premises, the landlord refused to pay clean-up costs, which ultimately were paid by the museum. After the museum commenced arbitration, the landlord responded with a counterclaim alleging that the museum failed to restore the premises to its original office space configuration and sought damages that, if awarded, would have exceeded the amounts sought by the museum. Both sides were entrenched and neither appeared willing to compromise.



The new Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, designed by Belzberg Architects.

Harrison and Jarin submitted an extensive arbitration brief, located new evidence, secured the testimony of a key third party witness and were fully prepared to try the case. On the evening before arbitration was set to commence, the opposing party offered to resolve all disputes on terms favorable to the museum, which opened its permanent location at 100 South The Grove Drive in October 2010.

French-Speaking Firm Members Lend Skills to Support Haiti Advocates

Chicago public finance attorney **Christopher Torem**, who is fluent in French, and secretary **Jacqueline Van Fossan**, a native French speaker, teamed up to assist the [Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti](#) (IJDH) with the English-to-French translation of a report for submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Prepared by the IJDH, the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice and two other groups, the report “Right to Food, Water and Sanitation” advocates a stronger implementation of the rights-based approach to assistance in Haiti following the January 2010 earthquake. The IJDH supports the people of Haiti in their non-violent struggle for the consideration of constitutional democracy, justice and human rights, by distributing objective and accurate information on human rights conditions in Haiti, pursuing legal cases, and cooperating with human rights and solidarity groups in Haiti and abroad.

Katten Client Launches Green Market in Queens

Douglaston Local Development Corporation, which was formed to revitalize the Queens, New York, community of Douglaston’s business area, has secured approval to operate a green market at the neighborhood’s Long Island Rail Road station. [Douglaston’s green market](#) makes its debut on July 10 and will be operated by GrowNYC, which runs the largest and most diverse outdoor urban farmers market network in the country, including Union Square Greenmarket and 53 other markets throughout the city. New York corporate partner **David Pentlow** serves as president of the Douglaston Local Development Corporation, in which capacity he helped with the application for a street permit for the green market. David, with assistance from corporate associate **Jonathan Weiner** and tax partner **Zvi Hahn**, also helped with the formation of the group, drafting all the organizational documents and applying for tax-exempt status with the IRS.

Washington Associate Recognized for Assisting Elderly Resident

Corporate associate **Sean Gordon** was named in a letter of thanks to the [AARP’s Legal Counsel for the Elderly](#) (LCE) from a client he assisted with estate planning through LCE’s Pro Bono Project. For more than 35 years, LCE has championed the dignity and rights of D.C.’s elderly by providing free legal services to those in need—empowering, defending and protecting vulnerable seniors.

Chicago Attorneys Honored for Animal Welfare Efforts

The [South Suburban Humane Society](#) (SSHS) honored Katten at its 40th anniversary celebration in April, for the firm’s assistance in securing a ruling allowing the group to adopt out 53 dogs rescued in 2010 from deplorable conditions at an alleged puppy mill in rural Illinois by the Cook County Sheriff’s Department, Illinois State Police and the SSHS. Litigation partner **David Stagman** and trusts and estates associate **Juli Gilliam**, aided by litigation associates **Andrew Boldt** and **Brian Poronsky**, represented the SSHS, which a judge had barred from selling, adopting or euthanizing any of the dogs or puppies born to pregnant animals after the dogs were seized. In February, the judge declined to extend the injunction prohibiting the SHHS from adopting out the dogs on the basis that dogs are property under Illinois law, and therefore money damages are an adequate remedy at law.



Juli Gilliam and David Stagman were the guests of honor at the SSHS 40th Anniversary Cocktail Party, along with the group’s outside counsel Valerie Schramm (pictured at right).



Launching Long Island's First Film Festival

A team of Katten attorneys from the New York and Chicago offices provided *pro bono* representation to the [Gold Coast International Film Festival](#) (GCIFF), which was held June 1–5 on Long Island's storied Gold Coast, a beautiful and historic region stretching along the North Shore of Nassau County that was immortalized by F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*. The GCIFF was founded by Regina Keller Gil, executive director of the Great Neck Arts Center. In this, its inaugural year, the GCIFF featured 65 films over five days and received widespread media coverage and critical praise. Katten attorneys assisted in the drafting, review and negotiation of corporate sponsorship agreements critical to securing funding for the festival; screening license agreements necessary to present certain films; a ticketing agreement that provided for online ticket sales via e-commerce websites (including the privacy policy and terms of use governing such sales); occupancy agreements for movie theaters and other festival event venues; vendor agreements; and insurance agreements. The firm also served as a sponsor of the event.



The Katten team included trusts and estates partner **Ronni Davidowitz**, intellectual property associate **David Sherman**, corporate partner **Marc Tract**, staff attorney **Becky Williams**, corporate associate **Palash Pandya**, real estate associate **Jonathan Boswell** and financial services associate **Hannah Amoah**. Read a *New York Times* article about the festival [here](#).

Settlement Achieved for Disabled Employee in ADA Case

Chicago labor attorney **Laura Waller** secured a favorable result for the firm's court-appointed client in an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) case in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Our client, a longtime employee of a major retailer's hair salon, had been terminated from her job—after requesting time off to deal with a serious medical condition—for violating a minor work rule. The employer refused to accept our client's explanation for the alleged infraction. Following Laura's presentation to the employer's counsel and the judge in the case, a settlement was reached providing for a substantial award of back-pay for our client, who is ecstatic with the result.

Chicago Office Launches New Partnership with Elementary School

Since 2003, Katten has partnered with Chicago's Philo Carpenter Elementary School on programs designed to improve students' literacy, increase their use of technology, and encourage and reward academic achievement. With the closure of Philo Carpenter at the end of the 2010–11 school year, Katten is embarking upon a partnership with another Chicago public school, [Jose de Diego Community Academy](#). Jose de Diego serves roughly 900 students from the Wicker Park and Humboldt Park neighborhoods on Chicago's Near West Side. Approximately 97% of the students are minorities coming from low-income families, and the school has just been put on probation by the Chicago Board of Education. The firm's partnership with Jose de Diego likely will include a tutoring/reading program, a Lawyers in the Classroom program and a holiday book drive, among other activities. To get involved, contact **Laura Waller** or **Alyx Pattison**.

Summer Party Benefits Center for Disability and Elder Law

On June 18, Chicago litigation partner **Wells Hutchison** and his wife, Christine, hosted "CDEL-Palooza," an open house event benefiting the [Center for Disability and Elder Law](#) (CDEL). CDEL provides *pro bono* legal services through the combined efforts of an in-house staff and a network of hundreds of volunteer attorneys, paralegals and law students. Wells has served on the CDEL Board of Directors since 2008.

Appointments

New York structured finance associate **Samantha Warshauer** has been asked to join [Lawyers Alliance for New York's](#) new Associates Advisory Board. Sam previously served as an extern at Lawyers Alliance, which provides business and transactional legal services for thousands of nonprofits across New York City.

Public finance partner **Milton Wakschlag**, the first partner to win a Katten *Pro Bono* Service Award (in 2001), has been named as the new Chair of the Chicago Office *Pro Bono* Committee.

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.

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