

pro bono & community service NEWS

March 2011

Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence in Washington, D.C.

Partner Receives District Alliance for Safe Housing's Pillar Award

Real estate partner **John Muir**, the Washington chair of the firm's *Pro Bono* Committee, was recognized by the [District Alliance for Safe Housing \(DASH\)](#) with its first-ever Pillar Award for outstanding service to the organization. The Pillar Award honors community partners who have gone the extra mile to help support the work and mission of DASH, which is to ensure access to safe and sustainable refuge for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault through the development and management of safe housing and related services. John and a team of Katten attorneys including associates **Blake Daniels** (Litigation) and **David Carey** (Real Estate) and partner **Bruce Kosub** (Real Estate), negotiated the financing for DASH's new facility in the northeast section of the city, which the organization moved into in September of last year. John and the firm were honored at DASH's Allies in Change Awards Luncheon in March. >> [read more](#)

Word Processor Forms Group to Assist Abuse Victims

Sylvia Nur (Word Processing, Washington) co-founded Thirteen:Twenty-One, a Christian faith-based organization dedicated to empowering homeless women to break the cycle of domestic violence, with the hope of helping to prevent women from returning to abusive situations out of necessity. The group draws its name—and its inspiration—from Exodus 13:21, “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.” “Some women, coming out of domestic violence and faced with an uncertain future, will opt to go back into that abusive situation because it is familiar,” says Sylvia. “Our goal is to establish lasting relationships with those women and their children, identify their most pressing necessities and work to support them. Sometimes it takes nine times before the person gets out of the domestic violence situation permanently.” For the past two years, Thirteen:Twenty-One has served as an important adjunct to the [Family Crisis Center of Prince George's County in Maryland](#), a shelter for victims of domestic violence. The group and its network of 10 volunteers—which includes a former resident of the Family Crisis Center—offer women living at the shelter genuine friendship and support, regularly organize outreach events for the women and their children, and provide transportation when needed. Thirteen:Twenty-One is currently looking for individuals to “adopt a bedroom” to decorate at the shelter. Contact Sylvia for more information.

Judge Awards Katten Clients \$1.44 Million in Hate Crimes Lawsuit

Chicago litigation partner **Pam Smith** and associates **Laura Brake**, **Monica Mosby** and **Brian Poronsky** won a \$1.44 million award under the Illinois Hate Crimes Act from the Circuit Court of Kankakee County (Illinois) on behalf of three young African-American men who were brutally beaten by a mob of white men in a racially motivated and unprovoked attack that took place when the young men attempted to visit a longtime white, female friend in Manteno, Illinois, in February 2005. Pam, Laura, Monica and Brian, along with former Katten associate Sonja Clayton-Pedersen, worked long and hard over several years, in cooperation with the Bias Violence Project of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, to secure this outstanding result. >> [read more](#)



Chicago Team Defends First Amendment Rights of Online Parents Group

Chicago litigation associate **David Benson** led a team including **Jonathan Baum** and fellow litigation associates **Blake Mills** and **Sherina Maye** in successfully representing Neighborhood Parents Network (NPN), the largest organized parent resource network in Chicago, in a recent action in the Circuit Court of Cook County (Illinois). In the case, a preschool sought an order compelling NPN to disclose the identity of four anonymous NPN members who posted 11 allegedly defamatory statements about the preschool on NPN's online discussion board. The Katten team argued that the disclosure of NPN's anonymous members' identities would violate the First Amendment's guarantee of the freedoms to associate freely and speak anonymously, especially since the posts in question were not even actionable as defamatory. The court agreed with the Katten team and determined that 10 of the 11 statements were not actionable. The court did find, however, that while NPN had advanced "powerful policy and First Amendment arguments," one statement sufficiently pled defamation, thus warranting an order requiring NPN to disclose the identity of the one anonymous member who had allegedly written that specific statement. Both sides declined to appeal the court's order.

Protecting a "Woolly Wonder"

Los Angeles entertainment and media partner **Susan Grode** has been working with the Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef (HCCR), a unique fusion of art, science, mathematics, environmentalism and community, as it evolves and expands. Created and curated by sisters Margaret and Christine Wertheim, co-founders of the Los Angeles-based nonprofit educational organization the Institute for Figuring (IFF), the HCCR calls attention to the plight of the world's coral reefs and the need to protect them. The Australian-born Wertheims began the HCCR project in 2005 as an homage to their country's natural wonder, the Great Barrier Reef, which contains the world's largest collection of coral reefs and has sustained serious damage as a result of climate change and over-development. They have since worked with communities all over the world to create local crochet reefs, or "Satellite Reefs," effectively launching an "ongoing evolutionary experiment" that mirrors the living reefs. After major showings in London, New York, Chicago and Dublin, the HCCR is on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., until April 24. Susan is finishing the HCCR's agreement with the Smithsonian and helping to revise other existing agreements to protect the art that comprises the Crochet Reef, as well as the reputation of the IFF. She will also be negotiating the HCCR documentary film and publishing agreements for IFF. To learn more about the Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef, click [here](#).

Katten Attorneys Participate in New Domestic Violence Court Project

Katten is one of the participating law firms in a program launched in January to provide much-needed *pro bono* legal representation to domestic violence victims seeking civil orders of protection in the Domestic Violence Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County (Illinois). The division's presiding judge, alarmed by the large number of domestic violence victims in her court who seek protection from their abusers without the benefit of counsel, convened representatives of several law firms to pilot a program of supplying "duty day" volunteer attorneys to represent the abuse victims. The volunteers go through a half-day training course (available online), conduct a site visit at the court for orientation, and commit to a half-day every other month representing pre-screened clients whom they interview at the courthouse, prepare a complaint and supporting affidavit for, and then take before a judge to obtain the protective order. Katten attorneys took two full duty days in February and two in March, and are scheduled for another two in April. Participating attorneys include corporate associates **Diane Bell** and **Erin Duncumb**, IP associate **Christine Bestor**, commercial finance associate **Elizabeth Hermann Smith**, and litigation associates **Blake Goebel**, **Sherina Maye**, **Elizabeth McDonald**, **Guinevere Moore** and **Christina Morrison**. The pilot project will be formally evaluated this spring, but the presiding judge is already extremely pleased with how the volunteer lawyers have improved justice at her courthouse. Additional volunteers are always welcome. If you are interested in joining the Katten domestic violence team, please contact Jonathan Baum.

Los Angeles Attorneys Assist Immigrant Teen

Litigation partner **Charles Stern** and former associate Amy Dunphy recently helped a young man who fled his home in rural Honduras two years ago obtain immigrant status. As a teenager in Honduras, our client was threatened by criminal gangs, prevented from going to school and forced to work in the fields by his alcoholic father. He crossed over the Mexican border in Texas in 2009 and was taken into custody by immigration agents. Eventually, he was committed to the care of a foster care agency in Orange County, California, where he now lives in a foster home and attends high school. To prevent the young man from being sent back to Honduras, the Katten team petitioned to have him qualified for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. The juvenile court granted the petition, and the team received federal approval for the special status, which will allow our client to obtain permission to remain in the United States as a permanent resident and complete his education here.

Chicago Attorney Comes to Aid of Tenant Taken Advantage of by Landlords

Chicago litigation associate **Monica Mosby** won a \$14,000 arbitration award on behalf of a tenant whose former landlords violated the terms of a Housing Assistance Program (Section 8) contract, a lease agreement and various other local landlord/tenancy laws, including failure to return the tenant's security deposit. Together with attorneys from the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF), Monica represented a woman who spent 13 years waiting to be approved for a voucher entitling her to pay reduced rent for housing and found what she thought was the perfect rental property for herself and her five children, only to be informed by her new landlords on the move-in date that she would have to pay an additional \$490 per month above the amount stated in her lease agreement and agreed upon by the landlords. Fearing she would lose her voucher and her home if she refused, Monica's client paid the additional money for as long as she could. Coming upon hard times, she contacted city agencies for help with paying the additional rent and learned that she was being illegally taken advantage of. Upon taking the case for LAF, Monica reached out to the landlords to recoup her client's overpayment, but was ignored. She filed suit, but continued to work with the landlords to settle the matter. After Monica made a final demand of \$6,000 to settle the matter, and was again ignored, the Circuit Court sent the parties to arbitration, where Monica achieved a great result for her client. The award includes not only full reimbursement to the client but amounts for punitive damages and attorneys' fees as well.

Nonprofit Board Service

Nonprofit board service is both a great way to give back and a unique leadership development opportunity. Numerous Katten employees hold leadership roles with civic and charitable organizations, and educational and cultural institutions. This new regular feature of *Pro Bono & Community Service News* will follow the activities of firm members who serve on nonprofit boards. Please send information on your activities to jonathan.baum@kattenlaw.com.

Tom Leanse

[Anti-Defamation League](#)

Los Angeles litigation partner **Tom Leanse** and his wife co-chaired the Anti-Defamation League Pacific Southwest Region's annual gala in Los Angeles last December. More than 800 people attended the event, which raised more than \$1 million for the ADL. Tom also serves as vice chair of the executive committee for the Pacific Southwest Region and is an ADL national commissioner.

Tasneem Goodman

[Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth](#)

After serving as a board member the past six years for Latinos Progresando, a nonprofit organization that provides legal immigration services, **Tasneem Goodman** (Director of Marketing, Chicago) recently joined a second nonprofit board. Last fall, Tasneem became a director of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth, a nonprofit organization that promotes one-on-one



mentoring relationships between adults and young people. As part of her board service, Tasneem participates in quarterly meetings, evaluates applicants for the grants Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth makes to tutoring and mentoring programs, and serves on the organization's strategic planning committee. The benefits of serving on Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth, says Tasneem, include the opportunity to connect with others in the legal profession, particularly those outside of large law firms, and to spend time doing something that makes a positive impact on young peoples' lives. If you are considering nonprofit board service, Tasneem says, "I recommend finding an organization whose mission you feel passionate about. If you have a passion for what the organization does, you are likely to find your board experience more rewarding and to be of greater value to the organization." On March 31, Lend-A-Hand will host its annual awards dinner, which Katten has generously agreed to sponsor. Event proceeds will benefit the organization's grants to tutoring and mentoring programs.

Giving Kids a Second Chance in Chicago

In 2004, **Michele Moravec's** (Secretary, Chicago) nephew, Michael, became a recipient of a charitable award from Mulliganeers, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising funds for children and families in need. Michele and her family have been involved with Mulliganeers in some way or another ever since. Michael, who weighed just 3 lbs., 14 oz. when he was born in 2002 and was diagnosed with a rare chromosome deletion, suffers from numerous serious medical issues and faces an uncertain future where his physical and mental capabilities are concerned. Mulliganeers was formed several years ago by a group of longtime friends who would hear different tragic stories involving children; in golf, a "mulligan" is a do-over—a second chance to correct a poor shot. Although many times they would individually offer financial assistance to the family in need, they knew that collectively they could accomplish so much more. Michele and her family recently volunteered at Mulliganeers' annual St. Patrick's Day event, selling raffle tickets for the silent auction. The group's next fundraising event is its annual golf outing at Cog Hill in July. To learn more about Mulliganeers and all of its events benefiting children, click [here](#).

Los Angeles Office Highlighted in TV Coverage of Public Counsel's Run for Justice

Tanya Russell (Office Administrator), **Mia Wright** (Records Manager), **Nina Hughes** (Attorney Recruiting and Development/Marketing Assistant) and **Mark Gormley** (Marketing Manager) were featured on the KTLA Morning News in connection with the March 20 Run for Justice benefiting Public Counsel, the largest *pro bono* office in the country. The Run for Justice is held annually in conjunction with the L.A. Marathon, and [Public Counsel](#) is one of the 60 official charities of the marathon. More than 50 Katten team members cheered each other on to the finish line, after raising a total of \$3,460 for Public Counsel. This is the sixth year Katten has sponsored the Run for Justice. Click [here](#) to view the video.

Muchin College Prep Debate Team Wraps Inaugural Season

Coached by Chicago litigation associate **T.J. Maas**, the Muchin College Prep debate team recently finished its first season, which included participation in two Illinois Congressional Debate Association tournaments. Named after firm co-founder Allan Muchin, Muchin College Prep is part of Chicago's Noble Street Charter School network and strives to prepare low-income students with the scholarship, discipline and honor necessary to succeed in college and lead exemplary lives. Debate team members are continuing to practice every Thursday through the end of the school year in June in preparation for next year's season. Anyone interested in getting involved with the team should contact T.J.



Katten Advises National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty Concerning Copyright Laws

As part of the firm's ongoing work with the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP), Washington IP partner **Roger Furey** and associate **Pam Reid** drafted a memo on "Copyright Law and Best Practices" to address the NLCHP's concerns regarding how copyright-protected written materials and photographs can be used in their print and Internet publications. Designed to aid Law Center staff in ensuring compliance with all copyright laws, the memo included background material on the scope of copyright protection and public access to copyrighted works, and provided specific practical strategies for the Law Center to consider when evaluating the use of copyright-protected materials, including photographs.

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.

