

# pro bono & community service NEWS

March 2012

## Chicago Attorneys Receive Volunteer of the Year Award from CDEL



Center for Disability and Elder Law

Chicago litigation partners **David Benson** and **Wells Hutchison** were honored at the **Center for Disability and Elder Law's** (CDEL) 2012 Winter Benefit on February 22 for their "countless hours leveling the playing field and advancing the rights of [CDEL's] very deserving clients." The two were recognized for their work on behalf of a CDEL client who had been the victim of financial exploitation. The client, who suffered a stroke in 1995 that left him unable to take care of himself, was defrauded out of \$40,000 in Social Security benefits by his Social Security Administration-appointed fiduciary. David and Wells filed a four-count complaint in the Circuit Court of Cook County against the fiduciary seeking \$40,000 in compensatory damages for the Social Security benefits the fiduciary stole, as well as punitive damages. Based on the evidence produced by David and Wells, the court ultimately awarded the client \$120,000 in punitive damages and entered judgment against the fiduciary in the amount of \$160,000.

Founded in 1984, CDEL provides quality legal services, *pro bono*, to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities who reside in Chicago and Cook County. Wells serves on the CDEL Board of Directors and previously was recognized as CDEL's *Pro Bono* Attorney of the Year

## Empowering Young Philanthropists

Chicago partner **Steve Shapiro**, who lives with MS and serves on the Board of Trustees of the Greater Illinois Chapter of the National MS Society (NMSS), put New York associates **Jessica Garrett** (Intellectual Property) and **Michele Griswold** (Corporate) in touch with some remarkable young crusaders against the disease who needed legal help. Jessica and Michelle have been assisting in the formation of a new nonprofit, **Marbles4Mankind**, which raises money for NMSS and other charities through the sale of original artwork created using marbles and paint.

Marbles4Mankind is the brainchild of six-year-old Connor Grossman, whose mother suffers from MS. Last year Connor decided to make paintings and sell them to raise money to find a cure for MS, which affects about 2.5 million people worldwide, in a project dubbed "Marbles4MS." Since March 2011, Connor and his older brother, Jackson, have raised more than \$40,000 for NMSS. The boys wanted to expand their efforts to encompass other charities, and plan to donate to four different charities each year in addition to NMSS through Marbles4Mankind. Following incorporation, Katten will continue to assist Marbles4Mankind with its intellectual property needs, including copyright protection for Connor's artwork.



*One of Connor Grossman's marble painting projects.*



## L.A. Attorneys Litigate Civil Rights Cases

Los Angeles litigation associates **Cory Baskin** and **Noah Balch** prevailed on behalf of their client Jonathan Martinez in a federal civil rights trial arising out of an incident that occurred while Mr. Martinez was awaiting trial in the Los Angeles County Men's Jail. The jury ruled in favor of Mr. Martinez, finding that Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputies used excessive force during his detention, resulting in various injuries. Cory and Noah, supervised by partner **Steve Cochran**, were appointed by the *Pro Bono* Panel of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California to represent Mr. Martinez. The court's Chief Judge, Audrey Collins, who presided at the trial, commended the Katten attorneys for their deft handling of difficult witnesses and opposing counsel.

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Los Angeles litigation partner **Ryan Larsen** and associate **Gloria Franke** represented Alphonso Foster in a civil rights action in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California against four members of the Los Angeles Police Department. Mr. Foster alleged that, following his arrest for violation of a gang injunction in November 2007, the defendants placed narcotics evidence on Mr. Foster to have him falsely charged with possession of drugs in violation of his rights under the 14th Amendment. The drug charges were later dropped. While Mr. Foster survived the defendants' motion for judgment as a matter of law after resting his case in a three-day trial in February, the jury returned a verdict for the defendants. This case also was an appointment from the Central District's *Pro Bono* Panel.

### Residential Placement Secured for Special Needs Student in Charlotte

Charlotte litigation partner **Chris Hicks** recently assisted the family of a student with significant special needs in establishing an appropriate care and education plan with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools (CMS). The student's behavior had grown steadily more violent and destructive, resulting in three hospitalizations. Due to Chris's prior litigation with CMS over the care for the same student, CMS agreed to change the school placement from a discipline-focused school for students with behavioral issues to placement in a residential psychiatric facility. This is the first time that CMS has voluntarily agreed to a residential placement without being ordered to do so by a federal judge.

## Asylum Granted to Refugees in Washington and Chicago

On February 22, the government granted asylum to a Rwandan *pro bono* client represented by Washington litigation associates **Joe Fiorill** and **Dan Spurlock**. Paralegal **Angela Dillingham** and secretaries **Nancy Carroll** and **Rosemary Hood** supported Dan and Joe on the matter, and partner **Dave Rohrbach** supervised. The client, a man in his mid-twenties, was a key figure in an opposition political party being oppressed by the Paul Kagame regime. Because of the client's political activities and his family's activities, his mother was abducted and never heard from again; his mother's cousin, who was the client's father figure and mentor, was assassinated and beheaded in a much-publicized case; and the client himself was abducted and tortured for a week before finally escaping and making his way to the United States. The client has no doubt that he would have been killed if forced to return to Rwanda.

Dan and Joe interviewed the client extensively, prepared the necessary briefs and other papers, and coordinated the work of an expert psychologist and an expert on Rwandan politics, who provided affidavits in support of the application. In the final step in the process, Dan represented the client at his interview with an asylum officer. The asylum officer not only commented during the asylum interview on the quality of Joe's and Dan's work, she even came out of her office to the waiting area to surprise the client, Dan and Joe personally with the good news. According to [Human Rights First](#), which referred the client to Katten, it is extremely unusual for an asylum officer to do that.

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Chicago public finance associate **Chad Doobay** has added to his string of victories on behalf of asylum clients by winning asylum for a woman who fled Uganda, where she was persecuted because she is a lesbian. She was expelled from school, publicly caned and subjected to multiple sexual assaults because of her sexual orientation. After escaping false imprisonment and torture, she fled to the United States. Reacting to being granted asylum, the client told Chad, "For the first time in a long, long time, I am starting to feel safe again. It is going to take me a long time to heal, if that ever happens, but at least here in the United States I am not afraid of being myself. I am happy that I can start living a life without fear."

## Katten Marks Seventh Year as Sponsor of Public Counsel Run for Justice

For the seventh year in a row, the firm served as an official sponsor for **Public Counsel**'s annual Run for Justice, which took place on March 17. Katten's Los Angeles office has grown to be one of the largest teams supporting Public Counsel at the event. Every year Katten supports those who wish to participate in the 5K run/walk by sponsoring the registration for employees, their families, our clients and friends. Katten remains active in providing Public Counsel with *pro bono* assistance with immigration issues, unlawful detainer matters and Public Counsel's adoption program, where attorneys assist low-income parents with the adoption of children from the foster care system. Through Public Counsel, Katten also regularly handles civil rights and prisoners' rights cases. Los Angeles litigation partner **Gail Title** is Chairperson of the Public Counsel Board.



## Katten Helps Launch Chicago Lawyers' Committee's Young Professionals Advisory Council



CHICAGO LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW, INC.

The firm hosted a welcome reception and kick-off event on January 19 for the **Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc.**'s Young Professionals Advisory Council (YPAC). The YPAC is comprised of professionals under the age of 40 with a wide array of business, legal, government and nonprofit experience. Its mission is to advise the Chicago Lawyers' Committee on issues of race, poverty, community development and other civil rights concerns, and to be involved in events, programs and volunteer service with the organization. Numerous professionals from Chicago and the surrounding suburbs, including more than a dozen Katten attorneys, attended the event. For more information about the Chicago Lawyers' Committee or the YPAC, please contact **David Benson**.

## Meeting the Legal Needs of Washington Seniors

Washington corporate associate **Sean Gordon** assisted an elderly widow and lifelong resident of the District of Columbia with the preparation and execution of a will, a financial power of attorney and a health care power of attorney. The process took six months to complete, as the client had a large family to provide for in the will. The client was very happy with the end product. This is the fourth client Sean has assisted through **AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE)**.



## Investing in Women Through Microfinance

A team from Katten's New York office currently is representing [Seven Bar Foundation](#), a nonprofit social enterprise dedicated to helping women work their way out of poverty, in a number of high-profile initiatives—including various cause marketing campaigns and one of the most anticipated fashion events of 2012, Lingerie London. Through a combination of cause marketing and hosting top couture and luxury lingerie shows, Seven Bar Foundation raises funds for, and awareness of, microfinance institutions that provide loans to women entrepreneurs. Seven Bar's cause marketing partners include Fusion Beauty and Crystal Light, as well as Agent Provocateur and Diageo. The Katten team, led by intellectual property partner **Doron Goldstein** and including associates **Jessica Garrett** and **Jerrod Weber**, has represented Seven Bar in all aspects of its business, with a focus on intellectual property, advertising and marketing. Their representation has encompassed general trademark work, structuring a licensing/cause marketing model for Seven Bar's fundraising, corporate sponsorships, and providing various forms of agreement for consultants and designers.



*One of Seven Bar's goals is to make its ladder logo the symbol for support for pulling women out of poverty through microfinance—similar to the pink ribbon for breast cancer.*

## Katten and South Brooklyn Legal Services: A Decades-Long Commitment



Since 1989, our Trusts and Estates Practice in the New York office has provided estate planning services to low-income individuals through [South Brooklyn Legal Services](#) (SBL), a program of Legal Services NYC. Firm members staff a regular wills clinic through the SBL HIV Project, which provides legal assistance to HIV-positive Brooklyn residents. Volunteers prepare wills, guardianship appointments, health care documents and powers of attorney on an ongoing basis, and also advise HIV-positive individuals and their families on a wide range of matters involving insurance, employment and other issues. More than 1,600 people have received legal assistance through the clinics since their inception. Katten also consults with attorneys from the HIV Project about trusts and estates matters. The program repeatedly has been cited for its excellence, and in 1990 received the New York State Bar Association *Pro Bono* Service Award. Partner **Ronni Davidowitz** coordinates the program, and in 1999 was honored for her contributions to SBL.

Last year more than a dozen attorneys and staff in the New York office volunteered their time on behalf of SBL. They include partners **Neil Carbone** and **Jasmine Hanif**; associates **Allison Clayton**, **Alexandra Copell**, **David Goldstein**, **Lauren Goodman**, **Theresa Kraker** and **Marianna Schwartsman**; of counsel **Robert Friedman**; special counsel **Dana Levine**; trusts and estates administrator **Joleen Perlman**; and fiduciary accountant **Gretchen Wuerschling**.

## Empowering Young Women Through Scouting



On March 12, some 500 girls and women involved in the [Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana](#) came together for the Girl Scouts Leadership and Innovation Awards Tribute to Achievement, a dinner marking the organization's 100th anniversary. Katten served as a sponsor of the dinner, which raised \$865,000 for programs to introduce girls to science, technology, math and engineering, and to encourage girls to pursue leadership careers.

Among those in attendance were corporate partner **Maryann Waryjas**, who is currently in her second term as an officer on the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana, which as the world's largest Girl Scout council serves more than 86,000 members. Several Chicago associates and partners joined Maryann at the dinner.



Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana was formed following the merger of seven local independent councils in 2008. A board member of Girl Scouts of Chicago prior to the merger, Maryann was recruited to the new council's board and also served on the Council Realignment Committee that structured and negotiated the merger. She now serves as First Vice President and as Chair of the Audit Committee, providing oversight for the organization and playing an active role in business and fundraising strategy.

In recent years, the Girl Scouts have shifted their focus to preparing girls for careers in business, setting an aggressive goal of achieving gender equity in government and corporate roles by 2040. "It's not just cookies, crafts and camps anymore," says Maryann. "It's all about science, technology, engineering and math, and business."

Maryann, who has a strong commitment to advancing women as corporate directors, executives and professionals, says that one of her favorite Girl Scout experiences has been participating in Camp CEO, a special weeklong camp that pairs teenage Girl Scouts with women senior executives and professionals, who mentor the girls by showing them the leadership skills necessary to build a successful career. "It's incredibly moving to hear the executives' stories and help the girls dream their future by talking about where we've come from and how we got to the positions we hold," says Maryann. "We all really connect and learn from each other."

Katten counts 57 former Girl Scouts among its attorney ranks. Click [here](#) to view the firm's sponsorship ad for the 2012 Girl Scouts Leadership and Innovation Awards Tribute to Achievement dinner.

## From a Grateful Client

Charlotte litigation partner **Richard Farley** recently received a letter from a *pro bono* client extolling the service provided by litigation associate **David Morgen**. David helped Maurice Negrini, a WWII veteran, obtain a settlement in a dispute with a local Veterans Administration Accredited Claims Representative. The Claims Rep promised Mr. Negrini certain benefits that would help him afford his housing, but failed to obtain them because he did not file Mr. Negrini's paperwork on time.

Following David's successful negotiation on behalf of Mr. Negrini, the client called David and asked, "Who is your boss?" A few days later, Richard received the following letter from Mr. Negrini:

Dear Mr. Richard Farley,

I served during WWII and proudly did so. But I am always reminded so from everyone I meet. I originally came from Foxboro, Massachusetts, and the feeling is not so present. Everyone down here thanks me for my service. Now is the time for me to thank someone for their service. So to everyone at Katten and you but especially Mr. David Morgen who handled my case with the utmost professionalism, [thank you]. Earlier in life I had occasion to utilize lawyers, and some of them fell short of my expectations. But Mr. Morgen and your office's *pro bono* did more than I expected. The case was settled and is all over, but my gratitude lingers on. So please pass my thanks to everyone and tell them that when I visited your offices I felt I was in Hollywood. You sure present a first-class picture, but serve the same way. I hope someday that I will be able to do something for you. May our paths cross again. So for my daughter and myself, thank you again. And may God bless all of you.

— Maurice Negrini and Karen Turner



# Filling the Closets of Law Students in Need

Katten’s New York Intellectual Property Practice is sponsoring a student closet clothing drive in connection with the Fashion Law Society of Touro Law Center and Tender Loving Care (TLC) Community Fund. The student closet serves as a resource for law students preparing for interviews, internships and new jobs. If you are in the New York office, you can drop off your donations of new and gently worn business attire and accessories for both men and women in the Marketing Department between now and Monday, April 9.

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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).

