



FALL 2008

### Message from the Pro Bono Partner

This has been an outstanding year for pro bono work at R&C. At the end of November, our lawyer and nonlawyer timekeepers contributed 6,473 billable hours, with a value of \$2,080,791, toward pro bono work. As noteworthy as those numbers are, we should aim higher next year. This is not just because pro bono service is an ethical obligation or because it typically provides a meaningful experience for the professionals involved. While those are good reasons, the real impetus is the economy. As government budgets are slashed and financial markets post weak returns that diminish the funds available from charitable investments, legal aid organizations have been, and will continue to be, forced to make cutbacks that result in fewer staff lawyers and support staff ready to help the needy. Next year, the community will need our pro bono services more than any time in recent history. In the coming months, the Pro Bono Committee will also do its part, continuing its recent efforts to provide improved communications about a wider array of pro bono opportunities available. To that end, if it is anything the committee can do to help you reach your personal pro bono goals, please contact us.

Edward J. Heath, Pro Bono Partner  
[Pro Bono Committee](#)



*"The long-term nature of the case really allowed me to develop a meaningful relationship with the client and her family, and it was truly heartwarming to know that it was our work, in part, that led to Shaneece's homecoming. Never underestimate the breadth and depth of the skills you can develop doing pro bono work. I handled many unique and challenging situations in the representation of my young client, and I am a better advocate as a result"*

—Meghana Shah

(See "Bringing a Child Home," below.)

### Bringing a Child Home

Not long after [Meghana Shah](#) joined the firm in late 2005, [Jim Wade](#) asked her to work with him on a pro bono matter for the [Cherish the Children Foundation \(CTCF\)](#), a charity run by the Carbone family to help children in need. Specifically, the foundation received a request from a family whose young daughter, Shaneece, was rendered a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic as a result of a car accident at the age of 15 months. (Shaneece is pictured on the CTCF homepage.) The family's goal was simply for Shaneece to return home. (See [Pro Bono at a Glance, Fall 2007](#).) Reaching that goal, however, was not so simple.

Over the past three years, Jim and Meghana have represented Shaneece in hearings before the Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Retardation, worked in conjunction with her doctors and social workers at the Hospital for Special Care, and consulted with the CTCF team to get zoning approved for the new addition (paid for by the CTCF) to her family's home. While at times the process seemed slow moving, this past summer, after three years of advocating for her release from the hospital, Jim and Meghana received word that the State of Connecticut had finally approved her for discharge. Shaneece has been happily reunited with her family, she is attending school in the East Hartford school system, and her new bedroom at home is outfitted with everything she needs to be safe and comfortable.

### Helping Parents Understand the School System

On behalf of [Connecticut Appleseed](#), [Nicole Bernabo](#) and Ndidi Moses, along with Day Pitney lawyers, devoted over 300 pro bono hours in late 2007 and early 2008 to create handbooks on parents' legal rights in the public education system. In particular, Nicole and Ndidi worked on the *Zero Tolerance and Your Child's Legal Rights*, *Bullying 101: The Law & Your Child*, and *The Nuts and Bolts*

of *How Your School District is Funded* manuals. Connecticut Appleseed is a 501(c)3 organization that uses volunteer lawyers and other professionals to achieve systemic changes through legal and legislative advocacy, negotiation, education, and other initiatives. The goal of the manuals is to provide parents of children who are having problems in their school system with the appropriate resources to ensure that their children receive the support they need.

Ndidi recently joined the United States Attorney's Office in New Haven as an assistant United States attorney.

## Partnering to Help United Way

[Eric Kogan](#) and [Stephen Cooper](#) were recently recognized for their efforts, in conjunction with the [Pro Bono Partnership \(PBP\)](#), to assist the United Way of Eastern Fairfield County (Bridgeport area) and the United Way of Westport/Weston in the merger of these two agencies. PBP recruited attorneys from GE Money to represent eastern Fairfield County and then asked Eric and Steve to work with the GE lawyers on the matter. Subsequent to the engagement, however, GE Money underwent reorganization, and the GE lawyers on this pro bono project became much less involved. Eric and Steve stepped right up and successfully worked with the Westport/Weston volunteer attorneys (also PBP volunteers) to finalize the merger.

The United Way is a very important client for PBP, and PBP was very pleased with Eric and Steve's perseverance and diligence.

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