



## PRO BONO At a Glance

### Favorable Settlement for Veteran and Spouse



Robinson & Cole litigation attorneys Rhonda J. Tobin, cochair of the Litigation Section and a member of the firm's Managing Committee, and

associate Kathleen E. Dion, who joined the firm earlier this year following a judicial clerkship, recently obtained a favorable settlement for a veteran and his wife in a summary process case filed by the clients' landlord. The landlord claimed that the veteran and his wife owed \$13,000 in unpaid rent. On the eve of trial, attorneys Tobin and Dion negotiated an agreement whereby the landlord accepted \$5,000 as full satisfaction for the arrearage. Additionally, the clients obtained a month's reprieve from use and occupancy payments in return for making some minor repairs to the property. Attorney William J. Egan also provided valuable assistance in preparing for trial.

The pro bono case was referred to Robinson & Cole by the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center.

### Asylum Granted for Libyan Student



Robinson & Cole litigation associate Meghana D. Shah successfully represented a student in the United States from Libya who opposed Muammar Gaddafi, late ruler of the Libyan Arab Republic. The

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Favorable Settlement for Veteran and Spouse
- Asylum Granted for Libyan Student
- Asylum Seeker from Africa Receives Favorable Decision from the Bench
- Robinson & Cole Ranks High for Pro Bono
- New London Homeless Hospitality Center Receives Zoning Approval
- Message from the Pro Bono Partner
- R&C Cosponsors Connecticut Veterans Legal Center Event
- Parent/Professional Advocacy League Creates Massachusetts Chapter of Youth M.O.V.E.

### Message from Ed Heath, Pro Bono Committee Chair



As the year comes to a close, it is once again my privilege to note the significant pro bono contributions that our firm's lawyers have made. From Managing Committee members to new associates, our lawyers have, as of December 1, 2011, contributed 8,153 hours with a combined value of \$2,434,458.00 to transactional and litigation-related pro bono work. In the process, we have strengthened our ties with (and as a result, helped to strengthen) some of the region's leading legal assistance organizations, including the Pro Bono Partnership and the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center. Looking ahead, our pro bono efforts in 2012 will focus on collaboration as we continue partnering with our corporate clients and the court system on specific projects to better serve the community.

student publicly voiced his support for those seeking to overthrow the Gaddafi regime. Over many months, attorney Shah created a solid case from little available evidence and convinced immigration officials in Newark, New Jersey, that her client should be granted asylum. Her client can now remain in the United States without fear of being removed and sent back to Libya, where his family remains a target for pro-Gaddafi rebels.

## Asylum Seeker from Africa Receives Favorable Decision from the Bench



In November 2011, Robinson & Cole attorneys Laura A. Torchio and Megan R. Naughton had the merits hearing for their asylum-seeking client, a diplomat from an African country who

dared to voice his anti-government opinions and was ultimately ordered arrested by his government for doing so. The case began over a year ago and involved an interview in Newark, New Jersey, and then a referral to immigration court, culminating in a hearing. After almost five hours, the judge granted asylum from the bench, which rarely happens. He praised the applicant's credibility, the quality and volume of the evidence, and the excellent work of attorneys Torchio and Naughton. When the judge favorably decided the case, the client fell to the floor and wept. According to attorney Naughton, "There was not a dry eye in the house, including the judge. This is what being a lawyer is all about!"

## New London Homeless Hospitality Center Receives Zoning Approval



In October 2011, land use attorneys Timothy D. Bates and Joel C. Norwood helped the New London Homeless Hospitality Center, Inc. (NLHHC) obtain

## R&C Cosponsors Connecticut Veterans Legal Center Event

Robinson & Cole was one of the sponsors of the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center's Second Annual Wine-Tasting Fundraiser on November 10, 2011. Held at the John Slade Ely House in New Haven, the event raised \$115,000, which will entirely support the center's mission to provide and coordinate free legal assistance to veterans. Guests at the well-attended event included United States Representative Rosa DeLauro, New Haven state Representative Patricia Dillon, and Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy, who emphasized in his speech how the center serves to "honor the sacrifice [veterans] make for all of us."

Robinson & Cole attorneys Kenneth C. Baldwin, William J. Egan, and Keane E. Aures attended the event. The firm's pro bono chair, Edward J. Heath, was a member of the Center's Event Planning Committee.

## Robinson & Cole Ranks High for Pro Bono

Each year, the American Lawyer publishes its pro bono rankings for the nation's 200 highest-grossing law firms. This year, Robinson & Cole is ranked number 84 out of the top 200 firms. A firm's pro bono ranking is based upon the average number of pro bono hours per lawyer and the percentage of lawyers performing 20 or more hours of pro bono work. For 2011, Robinson & Cole attorneys averaged 44.1 hours of pro bono work per lawyer with 39.8 percent of attorneys dedicating more than twenty hours to pro bono work. To view the complete American Lawyer Pro Bono Report 2011, click [here](#).

## Parent/Professional Advocacy League Creates Massachusetts Chapter of Youth M.O.V.E.



Teri E. Robins, senior associate in the Providence office of Robinson & Cole, is serving as pro bono counsel for the Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL), "the Massachusetts family voice for children's mental health." PAL

the final key zoning approval to build a new homeless shelter campus. This approval culminates a three-year period in which Robinson & Cole has filed zoning applications and presented legal arguments to help establish a permanent home for NLHHC.

NLHHC was established in 2006 by a coalition of faith leaders after the City of New London abolished its social services department. NLHHC operates an overnight homeless shelter and a daytime homeless hospitality center in two church basements in downtown New London.

In 2008, NLHHC, with Robinson & Cole's assistance, began working to comply with the City's request to relocate the shelter out of the downtown area. The first request, to amend the zoning regulations to allow homeless shelters by special permit in a specific zone, was highly contentious. Shortly after approving that request, the City tried to shut down the existing shelter, but Robinson & Cole kept it open under the First Amendment by demonstrating that the shelter is a mission of the church where it operates.

Once NLHHC found a new site, attorneys Bates and Norwood helped NLHHC obtain the required permits, including a zone change, a variance, and a special permit. The shelter, however, was not enough because many homeless individuals with health needs cannot be fully accommodated in a shelter. To serve those individuals, Robinson & Cole helped NLHHC obtain a variance and special permit for a respite center specially designed to serve homeless individuals with specific health needs. With that final approval in place, NLHHC can move forward to purchase the site and begin renovations.

is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the mental health and well being of Massachusetts' children, youth, and families through education, advocacy, and partnership. Attorney Robins is working with PAL in the modification of its organizational documents and in the creation of subsidiaries that will allow it to create a Massachusetts chapter of Youth M.O.V.E., a national youth-led organization devoted to improving mental health, juvenile justice, education, child welfare services, and to serving as a certifying entity for Mental Health Family Partners. R&C received this matter as a referral through one of the committee chairs with whom Carla M. Moynihan, partner in the Boston office, works as cochair of the Boston Bar Association's Real Estate Section.

## **2011 PRO BONO COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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- Kenneth C. Baldwin
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- Christopher S. Pitt