



PRO BONO At a Glance

Pro Bono Event Held at Yale University

Robinson & Cole attorneys participated in a November 14 event highlighting pro bono legal work. The event, held at Yale Law School, was jointly sponsored by the Connecticut Judicial Branch's Pro Bono Committee, the Connecticut Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section, and the Connecticut Bar Foundation.

A reception featured remarks from Chase Rogers, Connecticut's Supreme Court chief justice, on the importance of pro bono work and the critical role it plays in the justice system today. Participants also screened a powerful and moving documentary about the efforts of two attorneys to free a California woman, Debbie Peagler, imprisoned for over 25 years because of her connection to the murder of the man who abused her. Following the 90-minute documentary, participants engaged in a question and answer session—moderated by Robinson & Cole partner Dwight H. Merriam—with Nadia Costa and Joshua Safran (Ms. Peagler's attorneys, who traveled from California), as well as Natasha Wilson (Ms. Peagler's daughter, who traveled from Texas).

Following the screening of the film and the question and answer session, the participants participated in a pro bono fair, allowing attorneys the opportunity to meet with, learn about, and get involved in the efforts of approximately 10 pro bono organizations across the state. Finally, the event also marked the formal kickoff for the initiative of the CBA's Young Lawyers Section to raise \$1 million in pro bono work during the months of March, April, and May of 2013.

Robinson & Cole has consistently demonstrated that it is a leader and ardent supporter of pro bono causes. In each of the previous few years, R&C attorneys and staff have donated in excess of \$3 million worth of pro bono hours. Partners Edward J. Heath and Dwight H. Merriam serve on the Connecticut Judicial Branch's Pro Bono

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Message from Ed Heath, Pro Bono Committee Chair



This year may have seen our firm's most impressive pro bono efforts yet.

In the last few months, four new awards were given to honor the commitment of the firm's lawyers to pro bono work. In November, the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center presented the firm with its 2012 Veterans Justice Award and named William J. Egan a Volunteer Hero. In October, the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut gave Jeffrey J. White and Craig A. Raabe its 2012 Pro Bono Award. Also in October, Connecticut Legal Services selected April F. Condon as one of its three 2012 honorees for her extensive pro bono work. This past summer, *The American Lawyer*

Committee, established by Chief Justice Rogers to plan a Pro Bono Summit designed to help increase legal access. Additionally, as part of the pro bono initiative of the CBA's Young Lawyers Section, R&C pledged 600 hours of pro bono service—equaling roughly \$150,000 worth of work—toward the effort. With its pledge, Robinson & Cole was one of the first Connecticut firms to make a pledge and was the largest single contributor of pledged hours.

Robinson & Cole lawyers in attendance at the event included Dwight H. Merriam, Brian R. Smith, Scott E. Sebastian, Evan J. Seeman, Sorell E. Negro, Amanda B. Barry, Kristopher I. Moore, and Elizabeth W. Kaloyanides. Attorney Edward J. Heath and Marnie Rubin, director of legal recruiting and professional development, played an instrumental role in bringing about the firm's pledge of 600 hours.

Nicole A. Bernabo Appointed to Board of Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut



The Connecticut Bar Association has appointed employment and labor attorney Nicole A. Bernabo to the Board of Directors of Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, Inc. The nonprofit organization is a telephone hotline, helping callers with legal problems in Connecticut that involve family

law, employment, public benefits, and housing and consumer problems, such as bankruptcy. The service is free and available only to low-income people.

R&C Receives Connecticut Veterans Justice Award

Robinson & Cole was selected by the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (CVLC) to receive the 2012 Veterans Justice Award. The award recognized the considerable efforts of the many Robinson & Cole attorneys who have handled pro bono matters for veterans through the CVLC in the last year.

The award was presented at the CVLC's third annual benefit on Thursday, November 8, at the John Slade Ely House on Trumbull Street in New Haven. Robinson & Cole was a sponsor of the event.

magazine ranked our pro bono program 97th among the nation's top 200 highest-grossing law firms. Around the same time that the Am Law list was released, in addition to the Connecticut Bar Association's Pro Bono Award given to me, our firm was recognized as having more lawyers than that of any other firm on the CBA's Pro Bono Honor Roll.

This year also saw the successful launch of four large-scale pro bono projects involving lawyers in our Boston, Hartford, and Stamford offices, several of which include teaming up with in-house lawyers of clients such as United Technologies, General Electric, and Northeast Utilities.

Then there are the numbers: We are presently on course to have dedicated over 6,200 lawyer hours this year to pro bono work at a value of approximately \$2.1 million. This has been a year of incomparable pro bono dedication. We have much to be proud of and much to look forward to.

Person-to-Person Purchases Christian Community Action in Norwalk, Connecticut



Paula Pescaru and Stephen E. Cooper of Robinson & Cole's Stamford office represented Person-to-Person, Inc. (P2P), in connection with its purchase of the assets of Christian Community Action, Inc.

(CCA). Following the transaction, P2P will continue to maintain CCA's current programs and services and to operate CCA in Norwalk under the name "CCA, a program of Person-to-Person." Charity Navigator, a volunteer-driven, community-supported agency which, through the sharing of goods and talents, responds to individuals and families who lack the basic necessities or resources to improve their lives, rated P2P a four-star charity. CCA serves the needy in the Norwalk area by providing food, clothing, furniture, and counseling services.

Land Use Attorneys Assist Soup Kitchen in

New York Attorneys Assist Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County



Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County, Inc., based in Bridgeport, Connecticut, has sought advice and representation from a number of

Robinson & Cole attorneys. The firm has represented Habitat in connection with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, which provides federal grants loaned through the City of Bridgeport closed by R&C real estate partner Kathleen M. Furey. Attorney Furey and tax counsel Michael P. Walutes assisted Habitat in obtaining New Markets Tax Credit funds through a program established by U.S. Bank, designed specifically for Habitat affiliates throughout the country.



R&C attorneys John F. X. Peloso and Christopher F. Girard have been working on foreclosure matters for Habitat and, most recently, Nicole A. Bernabo has been advising Habitat in connection with

an employment matter involving a separation agreement.

R & C Honored at Sikorsky's Veteran Appreciation Weekend

Robinson & Cole was given a replica of a Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopter in appreciation of its sponsorship of Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation's Home Run for Heroes event. The second annual event was held at The Ballpark at Harbor Yard in conjunction with Sikorsky's Veteran Appreciation Weekend. The event is designed to recognize and raise funds for those who serve our country, producing significant donations to national and

Application for Special Permit



Attorneys Timothy D. Bates and Evan J. Seeman have advocated for the right of St. Vincent de Paul Place to obtain a special permit to locate a food pantry and soup kitchen in a residential area of

Norwich, Connecticut. In July 2012, St. Vincent had to relocate from its previous facility and temporarily moved to premises formerly operated as a religious elementary and middle school. It is now moving to make its temporary location permanent and has met with opposition from the residents of that neighborhood. During a series of hearings, attorneys Bates and Seeman raised the right of St. Vincent, which is a ministry of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich, to occupy the premises under the First Amendment and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, contending that the Norwich Commission on the City Plan's denial of the application will impose a substantial burden on religious exercise.

This past year, St. Vincent prepared and served more than 109,000 meals and distributed another 228,000 meals to the needy. The commission's decision is pending at the time of this article's publication.

2012 PRO BONO COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Kenneth C. Baldwin
- Nicole A. Bernabo
- Pamela K. Elkow
- Christopher F. Girard
- Edward J. Heath
- Gregory T. Ligelis
- Megan R. Naughton
- Christopher S. Pitt

local veteran's charities. R&C was honored as a gold sponsor and was joined by colleagues from Sikorsky's legal department, the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, and other organizations supporting veterans through pro bono legal services and efforts. Participants also enjoyed the landing of a Sikorsky helicopter in the outfield, followed by a ball game.