

Justice Matters: Pro Bono Newsletter

December 2014



A Note from Pro Bono Counsel, Harlene Katzman

During the past few months we've welcomed an impressive group of new associates across the globe. This is our first class subject to the new pro bono service requirement of the New York State Bar. Starting on January 1, newly admitted attorneys wishing to be licensed to practice law in New York will have to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono legal service. Many of our associates completed this work prior to arrival, including in our summer program. Our pro bono clients are reaping the reward of having access to justice. And many of our associates are discovering just how satisfying pro bono work can be. Read this issue to see why.

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Harlene Katzman
Pro Bono Counsel

Simpson Thacher Assists Deutsche Bank Community Development Finance Group to Create NYC Clean Heat Program

A team of Simpson Thacher attorneys assisted Deutsche Bank Community Development Finance Group to create and fund The Clean Heat Program, which was administered by the New York City Energy Efficiency Corporation. This program established financing products for fuel conversions across the five boroughs of New York City, specifically targeting low- and moderate-income areas. It funded, for example, a loan for a multi-unit housing complex to help pay for upgrades to reduce the building's carbon emissions. Once the upgrades are completed, the building is projected to emit 37 metric tons less of carbon dioxide per year, which is roughly a 33% reduction. The team was overseen by **Andy Keller**, and staffed with corporate associates from across several practices, including **Matthew Levy** and **Jacqueline Barbera**.

Simpson Thacher Advocates on Behalf of Lawyers for Children to End Practice of Handcuffing Children in Family Court

Roy Reardon and **Joe Tringali** negotiated with the Office of Court Administration on behalf of Lawyers for Children in an effort to end the practice of routinely handcuffing litigants who pose no identifiable threat in Manhattan Family Court. This practice had extended to using visible restraints on children attending hearings related to their foster care placements. Thanks to advocacy by Simpson Thacher and Lawyers for Children, the practice has stopped. Lawyers for Children provides pro bono legal and social work advocacy to abused and neglected children, children in foster care and children in high-conflict custody cases.

Los Angeles Attorneys Celebrate Creation of Legal Clinic at the Jenesse Center

Matthew Cave, **Tyler Bernstein** and **Bradley Raboin** helped nine low-income individuals this month at the legal clinic hosted at the Jenesse Center, the oldest domestic violence intervention program in South Los Angeles. The clinic, created by the Association of Pro Bono Counsel, celebrated its first successful year. Attorneys advised the Center's domestic violence clients on issues including housing, public benefits and immigration matters. To date, the Firm has taken four clinic clients for full representation in matters relating to their public housing benefits.



Matthew Cave, Tyler Bernstein and Bradley Raboin join attorneys from other firms at the Jenesse Legal Clinic.

Simpson Thacher Leads Voter Protection Hotline for the 2014 General Election

On November 3 and 4, a team of Simpson Thacher attorneys lead a large group of volunteers from around the city for a national voter protection hotline. Through a long time partnership with Election Protection, the nation's largest non-partisan voter protection coalition, volunteers from around the country helped thousands of callers from states around the country, providing voters with information and advice on how they could make sure their vote was counted. Some of the issues voters faced included confusion over voter identification requirements and wrongful identification requests, registration problems, broken voting machines and voter intimidation. The leadership team included **John Bennett** and **Harlene Katzman**, who oversaw the program, and **John Ericson**, **Meredith Duffy**, **Jason Gumer**, **Morris Massel**, **Brittany McCants**, **Dan Shin**, and **Maura Whelan** who were shift captains. We also thank the 22 Simpson Thacher attorneys across the country who volunteered at an Election Protection Call Center.

Simpson Thacher Assists Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law with Reports on Voting Reforms

After assisting the Lawyers' Committee with reports on voting discrimination in South Carolina and Alabama earlier this year, the Firm completed three new reports on election administration and reform in Alabama, South Carolina and Florida. The new reports will be incorporated into a comprehensive report issued by the National Commission on Voting Rights. The election administration report is the second in a series. The first, which was released in

mid-July, 2014, addressed voting discrimination. The team included **Jeffrey Danley, Sophia Karas, Elizabeth White, and Jonathan Nussbaum.** The project was supervised by **David Elbaum.**

Recent Pro Bono Achievements

Simpson Thacher Secures U-Visa on Behalf of Guatemalan Mother of Four

Attorneys in the Los Angeles office successfully secured approval of a u-visa on behalf of a Guatemalan mother of four children who was the victim of prolonged physical and sexual abuse by an intimate partner. The team included **Mimi Cheng** and **Michael Freedman** and was supervised by **Dan Clivner.**

Simpson Thacher Associates Assist Coney Island Small-Business Owner

Laid off in 2013, Simpson Thacher client, Mina, decided to launch Prospect Gymnastics in the Coney Island neighborhood of Brooklyn. Start Small Think Big referred Mina to the Firm where associates **Daniel Avezbaki** and **Doug Tang** provided pro bono legal advice on corporate formalities and reviewed her client contract and liability waiver templates. Mina was able to open the doors to Prospect Gymnastics in September 2014 and currently has over 50 children enrolled in classes. **Andrew Smith** oversees the Start Small Think Big program.

Simpson Thacher Wins Asylum on Behalf of Russian Client

Associate **Jonathan Nussbaum** successfully secured a grant of asylum on behalf of a Russian client who feared persecution on account of his sexual orientation in New York Immigration Court. This matter was referred to the Firm by Immigration Equality and supervised by **Olga Gutman.**

STB Successfully Represents Woman in Appeal to the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles

Attorneys in the Los Angeles office successfully represented a 74-year-old woman who, after being on the Section 8 housing waitlist for Los Angeles County for several years, was removed after failing to log on to the Housing Authority's complicated website to "renew her interest" in obtaining affordable housing. Our client was fully reinstated onto the waitlist following an appeal that involved several months of communication with the Housing Authority. The

team included associates **Jessica Marek, Matthew Cave, and Kevin Kroll,** and was supervised by **Chet Kronenberg.**

Palo Alto Associates Win Asylum for Undocumented Child from Guatemala

Simpson Thacher won asylum for an unaccompanied child from Guatemala who feared persecution in his home country by a family member who severely abused him. The matter was referred by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Simpson Thacher team included **Jinna Kwak,** and was supervised by **Alexis Coll-Very.**

Simpson Thacher Secures Tax Exemption for Coalition for Queens, Inc.

Associates **John Bennett** and **Vanessa Grieve** obtained tax exempt status for Coalition for Queens, Inc., an organization that increases economic opportunity by fostering development of the tech sector in Queens, New York. The matter was supervised by **David Shevlin.**

Palo Alto Associates Secure Asylum for Russian Client

Simpson Thacher secured a grant of asylum on behalf of a pro bono client from Russia who feared persecution in his home country on account of his sexual orientation. The matter was referred by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of San Francisco. The team included **Christine Hanley** and **Linda Nyberg,** and was supervised by **Alexis Coll-Very.**

New York Associates Form a Food Business Run by Bangladeshi Women

Associates **Matthew Levy** and **Jihyun Chung** assisted the ASHA Group, which sells frozen samosas made with healthy, fresh ingredients, with forming



Co-founders of ASHA Group with Jihyun Chung and Matthew Levy and Legal Aid's Rolando Gonzalez.

their business as a legal entity and creating an operating agreement. The client is a participant in the Hot Bread Kitchen Program, which increases economic security for foreign-born and low-income men and women by increasing access to food sector jobs. This matter was referred by The Legal Aid Society and was supervised by **Joe Kaufman**.

Awards and Events

Christopher Lee and Christopher Caputo Receive First Ever Superhero Awards from Volunteers of Legal Service

On July 22, 2014, Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) held its first Volunteer Appreciation Event at Galerie Lelong in Chelsea to celebrate the work of the law firms participating in the VOLS Children's Project. For nine years, the Firm has operated a legal clinic at Bushwick High School as a part of this project. At the event, VOLS awarded its first ever Superhero Awards to **Chris Lee** and **Chris Caputo** for their extraordinary leadership of the Bushwick Clinic over the past several years. Starting in the Fall of 2014, the clinic leadership was passed to **Andrew Yong**, **Jonathan Nussbaum** and **Danielle Kantor**.



Left to Right: Bushwick School for Social Justice Parent Coordinator Jackie Sierra, Chris Caputo, VOLS Staff Attorney Liz Markuci, Chris Lee, Bushwick School for Social Justice Principal Ana Marsh, VOLS Legal Assistant Annamaria Santamaria.

Elisa Alcabes Receives the 2014 Jeremy G. Epstein Award for Pro Bono Service from The City Bar Justice Center

Elisa Alcabes was selected to receive the 2014 Jeremy G. Epstein Award for Pro Bono Service from The City Bar Justice Center. Elisa was nominated by the Director of the Veterans Assistance Project as the most outstanding volunteer for the project based on the quality and volume of her work, leadership and

support of pro bono, her commitment to her clients, and willingness to take on challenging matters. The awards presentation was held on October 20, 2014.

Lara Pomerantz and Mark Stein Receive Sanctuary for Families' Award for Excellence in Pro Bono Advocacy

Mark Stein and **Lara Pomerantz** each received a 2014 Award for Excellence in Pro Bono Advocacy. Hosted by the Sanctuary for Families Pro Bono Council, these awards were established to honor attorneys who provide outstanding pro bono advocacy for and representation of Sanctuary's clients. Since 2012, Lara and Mark have represented our client, who had been controlled and used for commercial sex on an almost daily basis for over 10 years by her Mexican trafficker. They prepared the client's application for T-nonimmigrant status and derivative status for the client's teenage daughter, and advised and represented our client over several years of cooperation with the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Mexican government. The client's cooperation resulted in the extradition of her trafficker and one other from Mexico to the United States, and their recent convictions in federal district court. The awards ceremony, "Above & Beyond," was held on October 28, 2014. **Matthew Levy** recently completed the client's applications for Legal Permanent Residence.

David Shevlin Selected as a Member of the David Rockefeller Fellows Class of 2015

Exempt Organizations partner **Dave Shevlin** was selected as one of 18 members of the David Rockefeller Fellows Class of 2015. The David Rockefeller Fellows Program was established in 1989 as a tribute to the civic contributions and leadership of David Rockefeller, the founding chairman of the Partnership for New York City. The Fellows Program exposes participants to key leaders and issues in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors of New York City and seeks to enable a new generation of private sector leaders to deepen their understanding of the public needs of New York City and take an active role in shaping its future. Simpson Thacher partners **Victoria Bjorklund**, **John Carr**, **Marcy Geller**, **Lori Lesser**, **Lynn Neuner**, **Bill Russell** and **Mary Kay Vyskocil** and have previously been David Rockefeller Fellows.

Jonathan Youngwood Honored by the Legal Aid Society of New York

Jon Youngwood was honored by the Legal Aid Society as a part of its 2014 Pro Bono Publico Awards. Jon was recognized for his ongoing commitment to the supervision of pro bono criminal appeals matters referred by the Society. The awards ceremony took place on October 8, 2014 at the Prince George Ballroom.

Harlene Katzman Spoke About Pro Bono Innovation and Leadership at Harvard Law School

Harlene Katzman spoke at a Harvard Law School program, *Pro Bono Innovation and Leadership: Law Firms and the Judiciary Working to Close the Justice Gap*, on October 22, 2014. The program focused on pro bono innovation locally, nationally and internationally, and on how current students could think about building pro bono work into their legal practices.

Rodrigo Surcan dos Santos Spoke on Columbia Law School's Pro Bono Panel

On September 11, 2014, associate **Rodrigo Surcan dos Santos** spoke on a panel hosted by Columbia Law School's Pro Bono Program on how his varied pro bono work impacts his professional development as an associate at Simpson Thacher.

Simpson Thacher Hosts Professor John Knox, United Nations Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment

On September 4, 2014, the Firm hosted pro bono client, Professor John Knox, whose 3-year mandate with the United Nations includes producing a series of reports that identify and clarify the human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Professor

Knox and The Vance Center's Environment Program Director, Susan Kath, discussed the substantial support that Simpson Thacher gave to the final mapping report presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Professor Knox also shared his insights about the increasing link seen on the international stage between human rights and the environment. The Simpson Thacher team was led by **Janet Whittaker** and **Adeeb Fadil**, and included **Rae Adams**, **Luis Pellerano**, **Mitch Ryan** and **Andrew Winerman**.

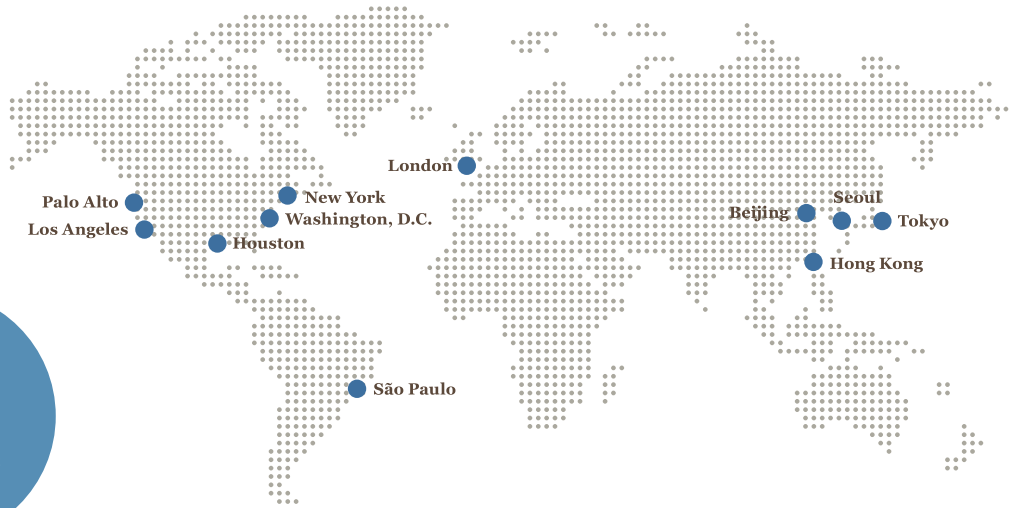
Simpson Thacher Climbs 43 Story Building to Support Pro Bono Client Her Justice

For the fourth consecutive year, Simpson Thacher employees from the New York office climbed a 43-story building for Her Justice's Story by Story fundraiser. Her Justice is a long-time pro bono client of the Firm that provides free legal services to women and their children who have been victimized by domestic violence. This event is one of the organization's largest annual fundraisers with over 1,200 participants and contributes to their mission to end domestic violence.



Left to Right: Alastair McVicar, Tom Kovoov, Kevin Elliott, Abdul Aris, George Wang, Joe Kaufman, Andrew Yong, Raphael Wong, Kara Krakower, Zenith Murell-Brown, Lydia Adamiszyn, Carola Beeney





UNITED STATES

New York
425 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017
+1-212-455-2000

Houston
2 Houston Center
909 Fannin Street
Houston, TX 77010
+1-713-821-5650

Los Angeles
1999 Avenue of the Stars
Los Angeles, CA 90067
+1-310-407-7500

Palo Alto
2475 Hanover Street
Palo Alto, CA 94304
+1-650-251-5000

Washington, D.C.
1155 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
+1-202-636-5500

EUROPE

London
CityPoint
One Ropemaker Street
London EC2Y 9HU
England
+44-(0)20-7275-6500

ASIA

Beijing
3919 China World Tower
1 Jian Guo Men Wai Avenue
Beijing 100004
China
+86-10-5965-2999

Hong Kong
ICBC Tower
3 Garden Road, Central
Hong Kong
+852-2514-7600

Seoul
West Tower, Mirae Asset Center 1
26 Eulji-ro 5-gil, Jung-gu
Seoul 100-210
Korea
+82-2-6030-3800

Tokyo
Ark Hills Sengokuyama Mori Tower
9-10, Roppongi 1-Chome
Minato-Ku, Tokyo 106-0032
Japan
+81-3-5562-6200

SOUTH AMERICA

São Paulo
Av. Presidente Juscelino
Kubitschek, 1455
São Paulo, SP 04543-011
Brazil
+55-11-3546-1000