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Roger Williams University School of Law

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Dear Friend of the PBC:

When we talk about pro bono we often focus on the number of individuals who receive legal representation. These numbers are important because they make a program's success quantifiable and direct representation denotes legal assistance in its purest form. What we don't talk about, but perhaps should, is pro bono aimed at educating and empowering traditionally disempowered communities. This type of pro bono allows an attorney's pro bono hours to impact entire communities rather than a single client. This month we want to spotlight two PBC projects that fall into this category, our Street Sights and PrYSM projects.

Kristen Sherman, Esq., a partner at [Adler Pollock & Sheehan, P.C.](#), and Heather Snyder, RWU SOL 3L, volunteered to research and author a monthly legal column in [Street Sights](#), a newspaper that serves "as a forum for advocates, homeless and formerly homeless individuals, students, state officials, and the general public to share accurate and honest information about homelessness." The PBC team has had four columns in the newspaper covering issues such as expungement and the legal implications of sleeping outside. The column reaches thousands of individuals each month.

The [Providence Youth Student Movement \(PrYSM\)](#) came to the PBC with legal questions regarding several regulatory barriers faced by youth preparing for the GED and youth trying to re-enroll in school after dropping out. Staff at PrYSM, founded in 2001 "to mobilize Southeast Asian youth into community organizing campaigns which, a) foster the process of healing and dialogue, b) build support and love for those who are isolated and marginalized, and c) build power in the Southeast Asian community," identified bureaucratic hurdles related to mailing address and identification requirements their youth constituents were facing at the Department of Motor Vehicles. These requirements were delaying, and in some cases preventing, youth from taking the General Education Development (GED) test. Kirsten Kenney, Esq. of [Hinckley Allen & Snyder LLP](#) took the lead role on the project, working with RWU SOL 3L, Jessica Stanford, and provided PrYSM with legal advice and counsel. They identified and researched the regulatory requirements to establish whether DMV employees were acting in accordance with those requirements. Had they found violations, the PBC team was prepared to pursue regulatory changes to facilitate easier acquisition of the necessary documentation.

We are very proud of the legal service these two non-traditional pro bono projects have provided and the impact they will have on the community.

Sincerely,

Eliza Vorenberg, J.D.
Director, Pro Bono Collaborative

Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, J.D.
Project Coordinator, Pro Bono Collaborative



News

March 19 Pro Bono Celebration

On March 19, the Pro Bono Collaborative, the Rhode Island Bar Association and Rhode Island Legal Services jointly hosted an event celebrating pro bono. Over 70 attorneys attended the event held at the Garrahy Courthouse and learned about the dire need for pro bono legal service in the state and the many different ways they could help. The law firm of Hinckley Allen & Snyder LLP sponsored this wonderful event.



John Tarantino, Esq., the Honorable Maureen McKenna Goldberg, Victoria Almeida, Esq.

PBC Student Volunteers Shine at the Feinstein Institute's Annual "Thank You" Reception

Four RWU SOL 3Ls received awards at the Feinstein Institute's Annual Thank You Reception: Ben Gworek (*Utility Shut-off Project and Foreclosure/Renters' Rights Projects*) and Hans Bremer (*Women's Center, RI Project*) received the Pro Bono

Collaborative's Annual Award of Excellence, Amy Peltier received the Public Service Award (*Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Project*) and Catherine Lemery (*Women's Center,*

RI Project) received the Clinical Legal Education Award. Congratulations!



PBC 3Ls: Kim Ahern, Ben Gworek, Anina Klein, Amy Peltier, Catherine Lemery, Hans Bremer and Yul-mi Cho.



Foreclosure/Renters' Rights Project Partners, Bob McConnell, Esq. of Motley Rice LLC and Brenda Clement of the Statewide Housing Action Coalition congratulating Ben Gworek on his award.

Does Your Law Firm Have A Pro Bono Policy?

The Pro Bono Collaborative has created a worksheet to assist Rhode Island law firms in creating formal pro bono policies. Creating a formal pro bono policy helps institutionalize the firm's commitment to pro bono and demonstrates to your neighbors in the community that you are serious about helping them. If you would like a copy of the worksheet please email Eliza at evorenberg@rwu.edu

Join The New PBC Facebook Group And Stay Informed

The Pro Bono Collaborative has its own Facebook page now where you can see PBC photos and link to relevant PBC news. To join just go to www.facebook.com, search for "pro bono collaborative," and request to join the group.

New PBC Projects

Youth Pride Project

The law firm of **Nixon Peabody LLP** is working with Youth Pride RI and RWU law students on several legal issues that will benefit both Youth Pride and the youth served by the organization.

Expungement Project

The law firm of **Nixon Peabody LLP** is working with the Family Life Center and the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless to provide individual representation in expungement cases.



RWU SOL Professor Andy Horwitz (center) conducting expungement training with Armando Batastini, Esq., and Timothy Baldwin, Esq., from Nixon Peabody LLP and Nick Horton (left) of the Family Life Center.

CFSRI Housing Clinics

The law firm of **Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP** has transitioned its education workshops project at Children's Friend and Service RI (CFSRI) to a legal clinic project assisting individuals with their housing issues. Beginning this month, EAPD attorneys and RWU SOL law students will be available for monthly legal consultations with CFSRI clients at CFSRI's Providence and Central Falls locations. Where appropriate, the attorneys will represent individuals who attend the clinic in their housing-related legal matters. Bob Sabel, Esq., Senior Staff Attorney at Rhode Island Legal Services provided the attorneys with training in March.



Bob Sabel, Esq., conducting CLE Housing Law training for EAPD attorneys at RWU SOL.

Get Involved: Projects Needing Law Firms

1. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Project

This project would partner the International Institute with a law firm and RWU law students in assisting undocumented immigrant survivors of domestic violence in their petitions to get legal residency. The law involved is relatively straightforward and the Institute has had a good success rate. These matters would involve the collection of evidence and the drafting of affidavits. RWU law students could assist with evidence gathering and affidavit preparation. Carl Krueger, an attorney at the Institute, will provide training and referrals for this project.

Time Commitment: Moderate

Number of Attorneys Needed: 2

2. Special Education Compensatory Services

Assist RILS in handling a larger number of cases where students have been deprived of educational rights for an extensive period and therefore are owed compensatory services to make them whole/close the educational gap. By bringing a larger number of

such cases, RILS hopes to create pressure for more systemic reform in particular school districts.

Time Commitment: Moderate

Number of Attorneys Needed: 2

3. Incorporation Project- Diversity & Inclusion Professionals

The D&IP began as an informal network of friends and colleagues working as diversity practitioners in local businesses, secondary and higher education, as well as state government. The steering committee is currently pursuing the development of a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) membership organization that will offer networking opportunities as well as formal programs.

Time Commitment: Moderate

Number of Attorneys Needed: 2

4. Children & Young Adults SSI Project

To provide assistance to RILS in handling overflow SSI cases of the non-fee generating type when assistance is needed (i.e. not initial application where retroactive benefits are used to compensate attorneys).

Time Commitment: Moderate

Number of Attorneys Needed: 2

5. Transactional Legal Services for Nonprofit Organizations.

The PBC receives several requests each year from nonprofit organizations in need of pro bono legal assistance. Accordingly, we are always in need of attorneys with business law expertise to assist these organizations. This is on an ongoing need, so please contact the PBC if you would like to be added to our list of pro bono attorneys willing to take these matters as they arise.

If your law firm is interested in any of these projects or if you would like additional information, please call Suzy Harrington-Steppen, PBC Project Coordinator, at 401.254.4559 or sharrington-steppen@rwu.edu.

The PBC Advisory Board

The Pro Bono Collaborative Advisory Board is charged with assisting in the PBC's programmatic integrity and long-term sustainability. We are grateful to our Advisory Board members for their thoughtful assistance. They are:

Tracy C. Baran, Esq., Partner, Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP

Laurie Barron, J.D., Executive Director, Feinstein Institute for Legal Service, Roger Williams University School of Law

Robert Barge, Esq., Executive Director, Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc.

Brenda Clement, J.D., Executive Director, State Housing Action Coalition

Mark Denehy, Esq., Managing Partner, Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C.
Jorge O. Elorza, Esq., Assistant Professor of Law, Roger Williams University School of Law
Susan Fontaine, Public Services Director, RI Bar Association
Seena Franklin, Director of Administration, Children's Friend & Service RI
Jim Gannaway, MSW, J.D., Rhode Island Division Director, Casey Family Services
John Maxwell Wright Greene, Alumna, Roger Williams University School of Law
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Robert McConnell, Esq., Partner, Motley Rice, LLC
Margaret Neubauer, Clinical Supervisor in Early Intervention, Meeting Street School
Elizabeth Oliveira, Esq., Nixon Peabody, LLP
Beth "Stump" Olsen, OUTSpoken Coordinator, Youth Pride, Inc.
Paul Pasaba, Program Coordinator, PrySm
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Henry Shelton, Coordinator, The George Wiley Center
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Liz Tobin Tyler, Esq., Director of Public Service & Community Partnerships, Feinstein Institute for Legal Service, Roger Williams University School of Law
Joseph D. Whelan, Esq., Partner, Hinckley Allen Snyder LLP

Judicial Advisors

The Honorable Edward C. Clifton, Associate Justice, Rhode Island Superior Court
The Honorable George E. Healy, Jr., Chief Judge, Rhode Island Workers'
The Honorable Jeanne E. LaFazia, Associate Justice, Kent County District Court
The Honorable Howard I. Lipsey, Associate Justice, Rhode Island Family Court
The Honorable O. Rogeriee Thompson, Associate Justice, Washington County District Court
The Honorable Frank J. Williams, Chief Justice, Rhode Island Supreme Court Foundation Compensation Court

Donate to the PBC

The PBC needs your help. If you would like to make a financial contribution you can donate online or via mail:

[GIVE ONLINE](#)

(please note your contribution is for the "PBC")

Please send contributions to:

The PBC, RWU School of Law, 10 Metacom Avenue, Bristol, RI 02809

The Pro Bono Collaborative is a grant-funded project at the Roger Williams University School of Law, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit institution. All contributions to the PBC are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.



**Pro Bono Collaborative
Feinstein Institute for Legal Service
Roger Williams School of Law
Ten Metacom Avenue
Bristol, RI 02809-5171
evorenberg@rwu.edu
sharrington-steppen@rwu.edu
401-254-4573
fax: 401-254-4540**