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March 15, 2021

Law School News

Making a Difference Together

RWU Law's extended family gathered Thursday night for an 'online edition' of its signature Champions for Justice event, raising more than \$95,000 for the school's public service legal initiatives in Rhode Island, Southeastern Massachusetts, and beyond.

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Glimpses of Champions for Justice 2021. Top row (l-r): Dean Gregory W. Bowman, Feinstein Center Director Laurie Barron, RWU President Ioannis N. Miaoulis; middle row: Joshua Xavier '14, 3L Sophia Weaver, U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith; bottom row: 3L Jessica Insurriaga, RWU Provost Margaret Everett.

It wasn't the packed ballroom event that the Roger Williams University School of Law community has grown accustomed to over the years, but Thursday night's "online edition" of Champions for Justice still delivered an intimate, spirited evening – one that raised a grand total of \$95,495 for the school's pro bono, clinical and externship programs.

And because the law school saved many of the costs associated with a physical event, the funds left for student programming “should be about the same as last year’s net,” said RWU Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman. “That’s pretty amazing during a pandemic.”

Champions for Justice is one of the premier annual events for the Rhode Island legal community. “Tonight’s program, because it is online, is different than in previous years,” Dean Bowman noted in introducing the event. “We will not be handing out any awards this evening. We are waiting until next year to do that, when we are all back together in person.”

Instead, Thursday’s event featured inspiring testimonials from two current law students – 3Ls Jessica Insurriaga from El Paso, Texas, and Sophia Weaver of Charlestown, R.I. – and alumnus Joshua Xavier ’14, now an associate with Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP. The three talked in turn with Laurie Barron, director of RWU Law’s Feinstein Center for Pro Bono & Experiential Education, about how they benefited from funds raised at past Champions events.

“What started out as an auction at the law school to support our public interest summer stipend program has grown and transformed into a huge gala that raises thousands upon thousands of dollars for the Pro Bono Collaborative, our Alternative Spring Break Program, Clinical Externships, Clinical Law Programs, and our public interest summer stipend program,” Dean Bowman said.

“We are Rhode Island’s law school, and we are fiercely proud of that. We succeed because of you – and you make us better. Collectively, we are making a difference in Rhode Island and the world.”

Fundraising efforts Thursday focused largely on a Silent Auction organized by 3L Cory Lee and featured items donated by RWU Law alumni, faculty, and staff, as well as corporate partners such as Kaplan and Themis (which contributed bar review courses worth more than \$1,000 each). Popular items included a wine-and-cheese board donated by the Feinstein Center; a one-month pass to park in the Dean’s parking space in front of the law school; and dinner with four RWU Law deans – Bowman, Bruce Kogan, David Logan, and Michael Yelnosky.

Attendees included students, alumni, faculty, and staff; members of the federal and state judiciary; elected officials; members of the law school’s Board of Directors, the Law Alumni Association Board of Directors, and the University’s Board of Trustees, and past RWU Law honorary degree recipients, as well as returning Champions for Justice honored in previous years. Besides Bowman, speakers included the RWU President Ioannis N. Miaoulis; RWU Provost Margaret Everett, and the chairman of RWU Law’s Board of Directors, U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith.

Bowman closed Champions for Justice 2021, saying: “If you are a graduate of RWU Law, we are your law school. And if you are *not* a graduate – we are *still* your law school. We are Rhode Island’s law school, and we are fiercely proud of that. With your support and your help, we will

continue to support the dreams and ambitions of our students, and the work of our great faculty and staff. Everyone here this evening has supported our law school in some way, and we are very, very grateful for that. We succeed because of you – and you make us better. Collectively, we are making a difference in Rhode Island and the world.”

RWU Law would like to express its deep gratitude and appreciation to the presenting sponsor of Champions for Justice, Jones Kelleher LLP.; to title sponsors Mandell, Boisclair & Mandell, Ltd., and Robinson & Cole LLP; to program sponsors Adler Pollock & Sheehan PC, Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick Ltd., and the Smith-Kushmerick Family Fund – In Honor of Caitlyn Horbert; and to event sponsors ACS Industries Inc.; Barton Gilman LLP; Cameron & Mittleman LLP; Coia & Lepore Ltd.; Decof, Barry, Mega & Quinn, P.C.; Gonzalez Law Offices, Inc.; Jenna Hashway, Esq. L’11 and John Barylick, Esq.; Higgins, Cavanagh & Cooney, LLP; Howland Evangelista Kohlenberg LLP; Keches Law Group; Locke Lord LLP; Marasco & Nesselbush LLP; Motley Rice LLC; Partridge Snow & Hahn, LLP; and Ursillo, Teitz & Ritch, Ltd. None of this would be possible without your generosity, friendship and support.