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## Newsroom: 'Champions For Justice' Honored 12-19-2016

Roger Williams University School of Law

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December 19, 2016

## ***Newsroom***

### **‘Champions for Justice’ Honored**

Stephen Prignano, Swapna Yeluri '07, the RI Medical-Legal Partnership, and Patrick Jones will be recognized for their support of pro bono and public interest law.

**BRISTOL, R.I., December 19, 2016:** RWU School of Law will honor three outstanding legal luminaries and a public interest legal organization as Champions for Justice in recognition of their “impact and accomplishments” in supporting the school’s social justice programs.

A special awards dinner will precede the law school’s annual Public Interest Auction at the Omni Providence Hotel on Friday, January 27, 2017. The event will “shine a light on RWU Law students and alumni, celebrating their dedication to serving low-income and disenfranchised communities in Rhode Island and around the country,” said the Feinstein Center’s director, Laurie Barron.

This year’s Champions for Justice Honorees are:

- **Stephen M. Prignano Esq. - Champion for Justice**



Stephen Prignano has practiced law in Rhode Island for 30 years, first as a partner at the former Edwards & Angell LLP, and more recently as a partner at McIntyre Tate LLP. Throughout his career he has shown a deep commitment to the lawyer’s professional responsibility to serve the community and those unable to afford legal help. Prignano has participated in, supported, championed, and provided invaluable advice and counsel to the Pro Bono Collaborative (PBC) since its creation in 2006. A founding member of the PBC’s Advisory Board, Prignano was instrumental in developing strategies to make the PBC sustainable

and provided a thoughtful and critical voice to the Board's programmatic discussions. Prignano brought his firm into the PBC as a leading pro bono partner, one of the PBC's most enduring and active partners for more than 10 years. In two recent PBC projects, Prignano expended innumerable hours providing pro bono legal service to the H.O.P.E. Federal Re-Entry Court and its participants. He also represented the PBC Advisory Board in drafting and submitting an *amicus* brief and official comments to the Rhode Island Supreme Court on limited scope representation, an issue critically important to access to justice. Prignano has also been an active and award-winning participant in the Rhode Island Bar Association's pro bono program.

- **Swapna Yeluri Esq. L'07 - Alumni Public Interest Champion**



Yeluri has devoted her career to serving low-income clients, children, and veterans. She is currently the Director of Pro Bono Programs for the Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP) in Baltimore, where she represents veterans seeking benefits and discharge upgrades; assists low-income clients with criminal records expungement; and recruits, trains, and supervises volunteer attorneys representing homeless veterans. Prior to joining HPRP, Yeluri spent eight years at Maryland Legal Aid representing children in child welfare and special education proceedings. She also created and worked in the Joining Forces Veterans Project. Yeluri is active in the community serving as a mentor through Community Law in Action, an organization that empowers young people to promote change in their communities. As treasurer for the Veterans' Affairs and Military Law Section of the Maryland State Bar Association, Yeluri continues to develop programs to assist veterans. While at RWU Law, Yeluri was the president of the Multicultural Law Students Association, participated in the Criminal Defense Clinic, and won the New England Regional Best Brief Award for the National Moot Court Competition. Prior to law school, Yeluri was the Program Coordinator and Summer Program Director for Bridge to Success, a mentoring program between Roger Williams University and high school students in under-resourced communities.

- **The Rhode Island Medical-Legal Partnership, Community Partner Champion**



The Rhode Island Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) was established to combat the legal issues interfering with the health and safety of children and families. Housed at Hasbro Children's Hospital and Memorial Hospital's Family Care Center, the MLP works in collaboration with the Rhode Island Center for Law and Public Policy, Brown Medical School, hospital staff, and RWU Law students to provide holistic legal representation to families where social conditions (e.g., unsafe housing with lead or mold) impact children's health. The Partnership's Program Director, Jeannine Casselman, Esq. L'09, has advocated on behalf of thousands of children and their families during her tenure. Despite an enormous caseload of clients and limited funding, the MLP not only provides high quality legal services, but also takes the time to train and engage RWU Law students through externships, summer internships, and pro bono projects. Through Jeannine's mentorship and passion, law students have learned how to be compassionate, creative, and zealous advocates. Additionally, in partnership with RWU Law's Pro Bono Collaborative, the MLP has engaged law firms and individual attorneys in pro bono special education law and guardianship matters. "The MLP has been an extraordinary community partner to RWU Law and we are honored to be a part of the important work that it does," Barron said.

- **Patrick T. Jones Esq. - Pro Bono Collaborative Champion**



Patrick T. Jones is a founding partner of Jones Kelleher LLP and of the former Cooley Manion Jones LLP, and renowned for his outstanding philanthropy, wise counsel, and inspirational support. Through his many years of meaningful and personal dedication, Jones has helped to propel the PBC into the robust program that it is today – facilitating legal assistance to those most in need and providing a strong voice for access to justice in Rhode Island. “RWU Law and the PBC are forever grateful to Pat for his exceptional contributions in support of pro bono legal service,” said Eliza Vorenberg, Director of Pro Bono & Community Partnerships at RWU Law.

***Information on sponsorships and tickets can be directed to Chris Santilli at [csantilli@rwu.edu](mailto:csantilli@rwu.edu) or at 401-254-3258.***

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