

# SPECIAL REPORT

Diversity / Women In The Law Pages 37 - 44

## HIGHLIGHTS

### SPECIAL REPORT

#### Diversity

##### Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses Page 38

###### Weil Vendor Program To Be Recognized At Awards Luncheon

Interview: Stephen J. Dannhauser,  
Executive Partner, Weil, Gotshal &  
Manges LLP and Selwyn Harry,  
Manager, Minority Vendor Program.

*"Any of your readers who are interested  
in learning about NMBC and would like  
to attend the luncheon (Thursday,  
February 22) may contact NMBC  
President John Robinson at (212) 573-  
2385 or Selwyn Harry at my firm."*

#### Women In The Law

##### Outside Counsel Page 39

###### Promoting Diversity In Law Firms And Corporate Legal Departments

Interview: Deborah Weinstein, Partner,  
Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, L.L.C.

*"Firms need to bring women and  
minority attorneys into their culture, not  
only in terms of work assignments, but  
also by including them in social events."*

##### Pro Bono Page 41

###### Advising The Poor

Interview: Tanya M. Douglas,  
Supervising Attorney, MFY Legal  
Services.

*"Although the amount of LSC funds has  
been decreasing, the number of poor  
people who need legal assistance has  
been increasing. This greatly impacts  
our ability to service clients."*

##### Organization Administrators Page 42

###### Sustaining Excellence At The City Bar

Interview: Barbara Berger Opatowsky,  
Executive Director, Association of the Bar  
of the City of New York

*"There has been a longstanding  
commitment by the Association to foster  
diversity with respect to gender, ethnicity  
and sexual preference in law firms,  
corporate legal departments, and other  
legal employers."*

##### Community Welfare Organizations Page 43

###### A Satisfying Career Choice - Counseling An Organization That Serves Human Needs

Interview: Ellen R. Zimmerman, General  
Counsel, UJA Federation

*"I can practice in a professionally  
challenging and fast paced environment,  
knowing that my work will ultimately  
benefit needy individuals in New York  
and overseas."*

##### General Counsel - Consumer Protection Page 44

###### Marketing Industry Issues Expert Plays Key Role

Interview: Lisa B. Dubrow, General  
Counsel, Consumer Protection, Synapse  
Group, Inc.

*"The most vital role I play is not just to  
counsel after the fact but to be there at  
the inception of that great new idea and  
help shape that idea so that product  
development coincides with what the law  
allows."*

## A Successful Litigator Makes Time For Pro Bono

The Editor interviews Elizabeth S.  
Stong, Partner, Willkie Farr &  
Gallagher

Editor: Please describe your respon-  
sibilities at Willkie Farr.

Stong: I am a partner in the litigation  
department. I represent clients in fed-  
eral and state civil cases and regulatory  
matters, including matters before the  
SEC, the U.S. Labor Department, and  
other administrative bodies. My prac-  
tice emphasizes securities cases, com-  
plex commercial cases, and  
employment cases.

Editor: When did you develop an  
interest in pro bono?

Stong: My interest in pro bono goes  
back to the first case I ever worked on  
after law school. We represented the  
City and State of New York against the  
Census Bureau in an effort to correct the  
undercount of New York City's popula-  
tion in the 1980 decennial census. That  
case went to trial in early 1983, and was  
an example of a pro bono case that  
addressed a large policy issue.

Another type of pro bono in which I  
have been involved is helping individu-  
als with personal legal problems. As a  
summer associate, I helped to represent  
a woman who had been locked out of  
her apartment. She complained to her  
landlord that some repairs were done  
inadequately after a fire. Serious dam-  
age was covered over cosmetically, cre-  
ating a dangerous situation.

As a very junior associate, I repre-  
sented the plaintiff in a wrongful ter-  
mination race discrimination case and got  
my first substantial deposition experi-  
ence. A few years later, I argued a Sec-  
ond Circuit appeal in a civil rights case  
brought by a state prisoner and obtained  
a reversal of the dismissal of his Section  
1983 case. More recently, I helped evict  
a drug dealer from a building in the  
South Bronx.

A third type of pro bono in which I  
have been involved involves educating  
people about their legal rights. Working  
with the New York City Bar Associa-  
tion, we prepared a tenant's guide to  
housing courts and a housing court  
video. One hundred thousand copies of  
that guide were distributed among the  
five boroughs of New York City. We  
focused on providing information for  
tenants so they can represent themselves  
as effectively as possible. Updated edi-  
tions of the guide are still in use. More  
recently, I have served on the board of  
City Bar Fund Inc.

Editor: Do enough lawyers volunteer  
to do pro bono to meet the demand?



Elizabeth S. Stong

Stong: It would be wonderful if there  
were sufficient legal services funding to  
cover these needs, but funding is inade-  
quate. So pro bono activity is absolutely  
essential, and there are never enough  
lawyers to meet the need. Even with  
this volunteer help, the unmet legal  
needs of the poor are significant. Pro  
bono work provides not only immense  
satisfaction, but also significant per-  
sonal benefit. I had my first trial and  
deposition experience, and appellate  
argument, in pro bono cases.

Editor: How are you and Willkie  
Farr involved with MFY Legal  
Services?

Stong: MFY, one of New York City's  
leading organizations providing legal  
services to the poor, has been a signifi-  
cant pro bono activity at Willkie Farr for  
many years. An associate works on a  
three- to four-month rotation at MFY's  
office in lower Manhattan. The  
"Willkie" works alongside the MFY  
staff attorneys, leaving behind his or her  
firm caseload. Within days or weeks of  
arriving, the "Willkie" is actively  
engaged representing poor people in  
hearings and at trial. Firm attorneys  
also serve as guardians ad litem for  
MFY clients, and I serve on MFY's  
board.

Editor: How has MFY tried to  
expand its contacts with lawyers in  
private practice?

Stong: Last fall, we targeted an event  
for younger lawyers - including corpo-  
rate, tax, and transactional lawyers as  
well as litigators - to introduce them to  
MFY. Mike Carroll, a Willkie associate  
and former MFY intern, recruited a ter-  
rific group to organize the event at a  
local club. Hundreds of lawyers and  
non-lawyers attended. We tapped into a  
wonderful source of energy and enthusi-  
asm for the kinds of things that MFY is  
doing. We hope to capitalize on that  
energy with new projects to keep people  
involved.

Editor: Could the enthusiasm and  
interest of that group be harnessed to  
expand services to the poor?

Stong: We certainly hope so. One of  
our plans for the new year is to organize  
a new group called Team MFY. Team  
MFY will undertake three or four pro-  
jects during the year. Members will be  
encouraged to participate in as many of  
these projects as they can, depending  
upon interest and availability. Flexibil-

## Elizabeth Stong

*Continued from page 37*

ity will be the key.

We are thinking about doing several things. Of course, there will be a second annual party in the fall, like last fall's event. We also want to do more frontline, "hands on" community service projects to provide direct help to MFY's clients - low-income, New York City residents.

One Team MFY project will be to encourage lawyers to volunteer as guardians ad litem by offering training to volunteers. MFY staff attorneys need lawyers and non-lawyers who can serve by appointment of the court as guardians ad litem for clients who suffer from disabilities that prevent them from making critical decisions. One example is the decision to apply for benefits, which could permit individuals to make rent payments and avoid eviction. Fundamental life issues can be at stake.

The training and time commitment involved in serving as a guardian ad litem is very manageable. In this role, Team MFY members will perform a real service to MFY's clients and have a very satisfying professional experience.

Another project we are considering is working with MFY staff lawyers to train Team MFY members to help people, principally women, in divorce proceedings. This is another area where many people who cannot afford a lawyer need guidance.

On the social side, we plan to make our fall benefit an annual event. And we hope to plan a holiday celebration and toy drive for MFY's clients.

**Editor:** How can lawyers fit this into their schedules when there are so many

demands on their time these days?

**Stong:** We want to create user-friendly pro bono opportunities for busy lawyers. By maximizing the flexibility in these projects, people interested in pro bono will be able to fit a project into their schedule.

**Editor:** How does Willkie encourage pro bono?

**Stong:** Willkie encourages pro bono in many ways. Willkie lawyers undertake a huge range of public service activities, not only as junior and mid-level associates, but as senior associates, young partners and senior partners. We begin as early as our summer program where we encourage our summer associates to participate in pro bono cases in the office and to work with pro bono organizations outside of the office, including the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and Brooklyn Legal Services, among others.

Many Willkie partners have significant roles in pro bono organizations. For example, Lou Craco founded and served as chair of Volunteers for Legal Service. Larry Kamin serves on the board of Legal Services of New York, Inc., and Joe Baio and Leslie Mazza have served on the board of Network for Women's Services, which was founded by former Willkie partner Cathy Douglass. Jeanne Luboja is on the board of Sanctuary for Families. Benito Romano serves on the board of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. And Governor Cuomo is Co-Chair of Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

Several partners are active in education-related public service activities. Jack Nussbaum is Vice President of the Board of Prep for Prep. Dave McCabe helped found a children's library and served as its president for five years. Dick Sammis, Tony

Schlesinger, Bill Grant, Gene Pinover, Dave Foster, and Yaacov Gross serve on boards of educational institutions. Tony is also on the board of St. Ann Center for Restoration and the Arts. Tonny Ho is on the board of Practicing Attorneys for Law Students Program, Inc. ("PALS"), which provides attorney mentors for minority law students.

Several partners are also involved with other organizations. Peter Schmidt chairs the board of City Harvest, and serves on several other boards. Rick Reinhold is on the board of The Adirondack Council, and we have represented the Council in constitutional litigation relating to the Adirondack Park. Ray Merritt is a director of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, as well as the SoHo Partnership, which assists the homeless, and the Whitney and Norton Museums. Tom Cerabino is on the board of United Neighborhood Houses of New York. Steve Gartner is a director of The International Center, which works with immigrants. Bill Gump is on the board of United Way in New Jersey. Peter Jakes is on the board of SelfHelp Community Services, Inc., which works with the elderly, including aged Holocaust survivors. Dwight Ellis is on the board of Colony South Brooklyn Houses, a settlement house.

**Editor:** Do you think that pro bono enhances judicial and community perceptions of the firm?

**Stong:** Of course! Everything a firm does contributes to its professional reputation. That includes its commitment to pro bono, in all of these forms. And a firm's professional reputation is one of the most important things it brings to court or brings to the table every time it represents a client.

**Editor:** If the poor are not accorded

access to the justice system, could that have an erosive effect over time on the justice system itself?

**Stong:** It is important for poor people to have counsel on issues that are central to their lives. These include whether they are going to be allowed to live in this country, to stay in their homes, to get benefits to which they are entitled, and to get appropriate educational opportunities for their children.

**Editor:** What are some of the things people can do today if they are interested in learning more about some of the organizations you have mentioned?

**Stong:** Two of the organizations have wonderful web sites that describe their programs and pro bono opportunities in more detail. MFY Legal Services is at [www.mfy.org](http://www.mfy.org) and the City Bar Association is at [www.abcnyc.org](http://www.abcnyc.org).

**Editor:** Would you like to comment on any pro bono issues that may be of particular interest to women or new lawyers?

**Stong:** Pro bono activity can be good for your career development. I was involved in my first trial as a second year associate in a pro bono case. I had my first argument in the Second Circuit as a fifth year associate in a pro bono case. I had the opportunity of working with the City Bar Association as a sixth year associate to draft and organize housing court information and learned how to run a meeting. There are so many ways in which you can acquire practical skills through the experience gained doing pro bono work. You miss out on a great professional development opportunity if you elect not to get involved.

## HOW IS YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DEPARTMENT DOING?

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