

Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board

Spring
2010

D.C. PUBLIC
SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS
PROJECT



Young peer mediator at Thomson Elementary School during training session conducted by Sidley Austin.

Peer Mediators Trained By Sidley Austin

"Resolving... Mediate... Empathy... Envy," proclaimed the foreheads of the peer mediators at Thomson Elementary School one Thursday in May. Each student discovered what was on his or her forehead through clues provided and sometimes acted out by the other peer mediators. The "Guess What's on Your Forehead" activity is one of the many exercises conducted by **Sidley Austin** during the weekly peer mediation sessions the firm provides for its partner school.

A dozen children in grades 3-5 at Thomson give up their recess once a week to become peer mediators. Sidley Austin has been providing peer mediation for Thomson for 15 years. But this year, at the request of the principal, the peer mediation program was expanded to include the younger 3rd-graders. According to Kevin Garvey, who coordinates the program for the firm, the younger students are very engaged by the exercises, and they quickly pick up conflict resolution concepts.

Sidley Austin has developed a set of peer mediation materials that can be used by other firms. To obtain these materials, contact Ron Flagg at 202-736-8171.

Call For More Partnerships, Comes From Bar Presidents, Chancellor Michelle Rhee

"A school partnership will benefit your law firm!" That was the sentiment expressed by over a dozen partners of law firms that have established partnerships with D.C. Public Schools at a managing partners' luncheon hosted by D.C. Bar President-Elect, Ron Flagg at **Sidley Austin** on April 20. D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, the featured speaker at the luncheon, explained how beneficial the partnerships are for individual schools and for the school system as a whole. "I hope you will make it possible to dramatically increase the number of school partnerships," she urged.

Approximately 20 firms who do not yet have school partners were represented at the luncheon, and many of them are exploring possibilities for establishing one. In addition to Ron Flagg, the luncheon's blue-ribbon host committee included current D.C. Bar President Kim Keenan and former Bar Presidents John Nields and James Sandman. During the luncheon, guests watched a short video that shows the variety of activities in which law firms engage with their partner schools and students.

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WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS

S C H O O L

Y S T E M



Michelle A. Rhee
Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools

The school system is enormously appreciative of the great work of the Washington Lawyers' Committee and the many firms that are involved in partnerships at nearly two dozen of our schools throughout the city. These partnerships are a terrific way to engage our community in the vital mission of improving our schools and enriching the lives of our students.

I have been very impressed by both the incredible breadth and depth of these very special relationships. **Drinker Biddle & Reath's** mentoring program and **Dickstein Shapiro's** Roundtable described in this issue of the *Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board* are great examples of what the

Committee's partnerships are contributing to our city's children. One of my favorite school partnership activities is the annual GeoPlunge Geography Tournament which the school system co-sponsors with the Committee and **Arent Fox**. Every year, I am inspired by how exciting learning geography can be for our students.

On behalf of the school principals as well as myself, I want to thank **Beveridge & Diamond; McDermott, Will & Emery; Reed Smith**; and **Stephoe & Johnson** for following students from closed schools to their new schools, where the firms have continued their partnership activities.

It was a distinct pleasure for me to attend the Committee's recent Partner Recruitment Luncheon at **Sidley Austin**, hosted by past and present D.C. Bar Presidents, including DCPS General Counsel Jim Sandman. I was delighted to see such a strong response from the managing partners at new firms to the idea of creating more partnerships in the months ahead. I look forward to the day when every school in the city will be working closely with a law firm or corporate partner. You may be assured that we at DCPS will do all that we can to facilitate this process.

You are making a notable contribution to our shared effort to create the finest possible school system for our young people and I look forward to working closely with you to build on the foundation we have created.

Michelle A. Rhee
Chancellor
District of Columbia Public Schools

Drinker Biddle & Reath began its school partnership with Anne Beers Elementary School with the annual Washington Lawyers' Committee bake sale in February 2009.

Our first initiative at the school was a mentoring and tutoring program. In the spring semester of 2009, 25 staff and lawyer volunteers traveled to Anne Beers every other week to mentor and tutor 25 students, ranging from 2nd grade to 5th grade. The first semester was such a success, 27 staff members and lawyers signed up for the mentoring/tutoring program for the 2009-2010 school year.

During the hour-long visits to the school, our volunteers help their students with classroom assignments, reading, as well as taking the time to listen and talk. Our mentors have enjoyed getting to know their students and helping them with their assignments.

This year, in addition to the mentoring program, we had two prizes for the end of each semester to reward the students for good behavior and academics: bikes for two students for the first semester and a trip to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum for 40 students for the second semester. The teachers and principal of Anne Beers kept track of the students who were doing well inside and outside of the classroom.

For the first semester, a boy and a girl in the pre-K classes at Anne Beers were selected to



Michael J. McManus
Partner, Drinker Biddle & Reath

receive the bikes. For the second semester, 40 students were chosen to visit the Air and Space Museum near Dulles Airport in northern Virginia. The trip included an IMAX movie, a guided tour, lunch at the museum and a learning lab, in which the students learned about the science of flight, heard a story and created their own flying device: the K-2nd graders made boomerangs and the 3rd, 4th and 5th graders made paper airplanes.

We look forward to continuing and expanding our partnership for the 2010-2011 school year.



GeoPlunge winners from J. O. Wilson Elementary School with Brent D. Glass, Director, National Museum of American History (left); Alan Fishel from Arent Fox (center); D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee; and Kendall Evans, J.O. Wilson Elementary School teacher (right).

Familiar and New Mark 5th City-wide GeoPlunge Tournament

A team from J.O. Wilson Elementary School took top honors for the third year in a row at the 5th annual city-wide GeoPlunge Tournament last November. However, the team from Miner Elementary, the “Run-up Champs,” gave them stiff competition. The Miner team was new to GeoPlunge—the students there received their GeoPlunge game cards a week before the tournament—but they worked intensely on their preparation. Third-place Thomson Elementary School and fourth-place Bruce Monroe at Park View Elementary School were also top finishers for the first time this year.

Another first for GeoPlunge V was the location—the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History. The tournament, which took place on the first floor in the Main Hall of the museum, involved 28 schools and over 150 students.

GeoPlunge is an award-winning set of geography games created by **Arent Fox** attorney Alan Fishel. As one student describes it, “GeoPlunge is a very educational game. It helps you with a lot of things that you should learn—border states, capitals, top cities—everything you want to know about cities and states.”

Each year, this event draws raves from the student players, teachers, principals and sponsors. Chancellor Michelle Rhee has expressed her appreciation for the GeoPlunge Tournament, which she has recognized as generating “excitement around learning that is critical for our kids to thrive.”

The Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and D.C. Public Schools, along with Arent Fox, organize the annual tournament, which is sponsored by dozens of local law firms and businesses.

The 5th Annual GeoPlunge Tournament was made possible by the generosity of the following sponsors: **Leslie Abrams; Tony Alexis; Mary Azcuenaga; Doug Baruch; Rod Boggs; Bracewell & Giuliani; Bob Bruskin & Isabelle Thabault; Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft; H. Guy Collier;**

(Continued on page 10)

Big Winners in Taste-Off Are Drinker, Biddle & Reath And Beveridge & Diamond

"Thanks to our excellent bakers, while we raise money for our school, we're going to bring home some first prizes," predicted Mike McManus, partner at **Drinker Biddle & Reath**, in early March. On March 8, his prediction came true when his firm captured prizes in all three divisions. In cookies, Alisa Lahey took first place with her white chocolate chip and cranberry entry. Alain Lapter's black and white fudge pie won that division. And Keith Kristo and Kristen Colley took third place for their chocolate cake.

Beveridge & Diamond was also a multiple prize winner. In the highly competitive cookie division, Jim Esselman's peanut butter chocolate chip entry came in third. "This is exciting!" he said. "I have to admit, it was my cookie, but my girlfriend's recipe. It was pretty tough competition at my firm's bake sale, so it is a big accomplishment to get your entry to the



Jim Esselman from Beveridge & Diamond with his prize and the prize won by his colleague Devon Dyson.



Photo credit: Diego M. Radzinski, The National Law Journal

Taste-Off judges selecting the best cookies. L/R David Dorsen, former food and wine editor of The Washingtonian magazine; Chris Floyd of Capital Restaurant Resources; and Aleks Duni, owner of Heller's Bakery and several local restaurants.

final Taste-Off competition, and then to win an award is extra special." Beveridge & Diamond also took a second place for its sweet potato cake baked by Devon Dyson.

First place in the cake category went to **Epstein, Becker & Green** for Anjali Downs' Guinness chocolate cake. The addition of Guinness was what put the firm's cake entry over the top, according to Judge Chris Floyd of Capital Restaurant Resources.

The purpose of the School Partnership Project's Bake Sale and Taste-Off is to raise money for partner schools and to have fun. Each participating firm holds a bake sale at the firm in the middle of the day and then selects the top pastries to be sent to the Washington Lawyers' Committee for the afternoon Taste-Off. Competition for the prize pastries was stiff at each firm. Drinker, Biddle & Reath chose their Taste-Off entries from 22 pastries. In addition to Chris Floyd, this year's judges were David Dorsen, former food and wine editor of *The Washingtonian* magazine, and Aleks Duni, owner of Heller's Bakery and several local restaurants.

Other second-place winners in this year's Taste-Off were molasses Sugar Cookie Bars baked by Elisabeth Bryant from **Bracewell & Giuliani** and Sweet Potato Pie, baked by Jackie McGee from **Stephoe & Johnson**. Third place in the Pie division went to Katie Buchrinsky from **McDermott, Will & Emery** for her flourless chocolate fudge entry.

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Drinker, Biddle & Reath's Ann Beers initial mentoring team. Back row L/R: Mike McManus, Elise Scanlon, Duane Van Bergen, Sheila Bonham, Tiffany Pender, Ramon Richardson, Alisa Lahey, Ken Vorrasi, Rene Quashie, Ron Grudziecki, Tonga Bolden and Van Easton. Front row L/R: Robe Goldstein, Karentha Streeter, Rita Adams, Amber Haggins, Amanda Dallo, Brenda Womack, Jeanette Wright, Darlene Smith, Towanna Bolling, Mark Sosnowsky and Jacqueline Goldberg.

Ann Beers Students Mentored and Rewarded By Drinker Biddle & Reath Volunteers

For the second year in a row, attorneys and staff from **Drinker Biddle & Reath** have been mentors for 25 students at Ann Beers Elementary School. Every other week, the firm provides lunch and a special bus to take 25 volunteers to the school. Mentors spend an hour with the students who often bring the Drinker Biddle volunteers school work on which they need help. The mentors stress writing. Every mentor keeps a notebook for his or her student and tries to make sure the student writes something every time the mentor comes to the school.

Since the focus of the school is science and technology, Drinker Biddle sponsored a field trip for 40 students to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum near Dulles Airport in northern Virginia. The students, ranging from kindergarten to 5th grade, were chosen by the teachers and principal at Anne Beers as a reward for doing well inside and outside of the classroom. Five teachers, plus Rebecca Lanz and Associate Guiherme Costa from the firm chaperoned the students.

The excursion included an IMAX movie on the history of flight, a guided tour, lunch at the museum and a learning lab. Tours and labs were tailored to the students' ages. Those in kindergarten and first and second grade took the Personal Aviation Tour and were introduced to the concept of flight and the different types of airplanes. During the Air Transportation—Past, Present and Future Tour, 3rd, 4th and 5th graders explored the evolution of aircraft and the variety of experiences that airplane passengers have today.

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Ann Beers Students Mentored and Rewarded (cont'd)

After lunch, the students were again separated into age groups for the learning labs. The younger students learned the basics of how an airplane flies, and listened to a story. They also created their own flying device, a boomerang, and they had the opportunity to practice flying their boomerangs. The older students learned about stability and aircraft design while making and testing their own paper airplanes.

Arent Fox Hosts Debate For Elementary Students

"Don't touch my sweets!" insisted a 4th grader during an impassioned debate at **Arent Fox** over whether food with trans fats should be kept out of school cafeterias and vending machines. In May, two dozen 4th and 5th graders from Randle Highlands and J. O. Wilson Elementary Schools spent a morning at the firm learning about and presenting the pros and cons of trans fats in school food and snacks.

One of the arguments against trans fats is the negative impact they have on the development of athletic ability. According to Alan Fishel at Arent Fox, "This was the best of the half-dozen debates we have hosted for Randle Highlands students. The students were really engaged in this topic."

(Continued on next column)



Student from Ann Beers Elementary School tests his paper airplane during the field trip to Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum near Dulles, sponsored by Drinker, Biddle & Reath.

The students' interest in the debate was also heightened by the presence of students from another school—J.O. Wilson Elementary School. "My students had a great time participating in the debate," says Kendall Evans, who teaches social studies at the school. "It was a great opportunity for them to speak in front of an audience. Many of them don't have other chances to do this."

Diversity Teleconference Brings Cleveland Students To Holland & Knight

In February, **Holland & Knight** brought 10 fifth-graders from Cleveland Elementary School to its Washington office for a Diversity Teleconference in honor of African American History Month. Over 20 of the firm's offices throughout the world participated in the event which featured former Washingtonian Charles Cobb, who talked about his book *On the Road to Freedom: A Guided Tour of the Civil Rights Trail*.

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J. O. Wilson students listening during a debate at Arent Fox.

LIFE LESSONS

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Epstein, Becker & Green volunteers with students at Emery Educational Center. Dan Gottlieb is in the back, and Deepa Selvam is on the right.

Epstein Becker & Green Introduces Legal Legends To Emery Students

Why do we have rules and laws? Who are people who have made a difference in my community? These questions, on the minds of students everywhere, were answered in part for 6th and 7th graders at Emery Educational Center by the Breakfast with a Legend Program that **Epstein, Becker & Green** brought to their school during the past school year.

The Breakfast with a Legend program was created by the National Street Law organization which provides a template and educational materials for law firms and other legal organizations to provide law-related education for students. This six-week program includes visits by three "legal legends" and classroom sessions to prepare for each visit. Epstein Becker & Green invited the legends, scheduled their visits and classroom sessions, and provided legal resource people for the visits and classroom sessions. Breakfast for participating legends, students, and resource people was also provided by the firm.

During the first classroom session, volunteers from Epstein, Becker & Green helped students understand what a legend is and told them about the life and accomplishments of Stuart Gerson, a partner at the firm. The volunteers also helped the students prepare questions for Stuart Gerson. When he came to their class, he not only answered the students' questions, but he also asked questions of them. During the second classroom session, volunteers helped students learn about the life and accomplishments of Vanessa Hall--Administrative Judge at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development--and they led a discussion about rules. When she came to their class, the students talked to her about her life and the difference between rules and laws. During the third classroom session, volunteers helped students learn about the accomplishments of Cliff Barnes, also an Epstein Becker & Green partner, and they led a discussion about handling anger. When Cliff Barnes visited the school, students talked to him about his life, and he participated in a discussion about solutions to school problems.

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Critical Issue Discussions At Ellington High School Led by Dickstein Shapiro

Violence and the Media, Citizen Action against Violence, and Government Safety Regulations vs. Personal Freedom are some of the topics on which students at the Ellington School for the Arts express their strong and wide-ranging opinions with help from a team from **Dickstein Shapiro**. Every other week, approximately 25 juniors and seniors gather in Lynn Moore's social studies classroom at noon for an hour of pizza, drinks, and a Roundtable discussion led by volunteers from the firm.

"Roundtable has been a fabulous experience for me," says James, a junior. "I learned a lot this year, and I plan on coming back in the 12th grade. Donte Robinson likes Roundtable "because it allows me to open my mind to the world in a whole new way."

Ellington teachers choose the participating students. Selection is based, not on grades, but on which students the teachers feel will contribute to and benefit from the discussions. Teachers are present during the roundtable discussions, but they do not participate. Topics are selected by the Dickstein Shapiro team that includes 6-8 volunteers.

(Continued on page 10)



Ellington student entertains fellow students and Dickstein Shapiro volunteers at Roundtable party.



Cardozo High School's winning Mock Trial team with Street Law teacher Kerry Sylvia (far left), and former Chief Judge of the D.C. Superior Court Eugene Hamilton.

Covington & Burling Helps Cardozo Students Prepare Winning Cases

With the help of **Covington & Burling** attorneys, Mary McKinney and Franciska Coleman, Cardozo High School fielded two winning teams in this year's Mock Trial Competition, sponsored by the Street Law Program at Georgetown University.

This year's case, *United States v. Dominique Stephens*, was about a woman who was charged with murdering her husband. The defendant claimed that she was the victim of Battered Women's Syndrome and that she was acting in self-defense. Cardozo had both a defense and a prosecution team. For rounds 1 & 2 of the mock-trial tournament, Cardozo's prosecution team won second runner-up while the school's defense team came in first place. This result qualified the defense team to participate in the final round against Banneker High School. Although Banneker won the points part of the competition, Cardozo's team won a "not guilty" verdict! This was the first time ever that Cardozo qualified to participate in the final round.

"The Covington lawyers who helped us were great," says Kerry Sylvia, who teaches Street Law at Cardozo. "They came to the school and coached the students for their roles. They also arranged for the teams to use a practice moot courtroom. After the *Cardozo v. Cardozo* practice run, we went to Covington for a review session. It was a great preparation for the students' performance in the actual tournament."



Students compete in 2010 GeoPlunge Geography Tournament.

GeoPlunge Tournament (cont'd)

Joe Davis; Kristine Dunne; Epstein Becker & Green; Equal Rights Center; Ron Flagg; Marc Fleischaker; Foley & Lardner; Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson; Melanie Gerber; Anne Harkavy; Thomas G. Hentoff; Ted Howard; Matt Jacobs; Jack Keeney; Benjamin B. Klubes; John Kolakowski; Stuart Land; Teresa Larson; Jennifer Levy; Michael McManus; Thomas J. Mikula & John Townsend Rich; John Oberdorfer; April Oliver; Elissa Preheim; Donald Remy; George Ruttinger; Barbara A. Schmidt; Eleanor Smith; Paul Smith; Mark Srere; Sutherland Asbill & Brennan; William Taylor; Leslie Turner; Denise A. Vanison; Chuck Walker; Roger Warin; Lewis Wiener; David F. Williams; Tom Williamson; and Ben Wilson.

Critical Issue Discussions At Ellington High School (cont'd)

According to Margaret Feinstein who has been active on the team for nine years, controversy makes for a good Roundtable. "We want the students to disagree," she explains. "A primary purpose of the Roundtables is to teach young people to disagree respectfully." There is usually a new topic for every Roundtable, but some topics are so engaging that more than an hour is needed to explore them.

Once a topic is chosen, a member of the Dickstein team researches it, and circulates a brief

memo about the topic among the other team members. Two to four team members come to each Roundtable with information and questions to provoke a spirited discussion. One of the most memorable for Margaret Feinstein explored when citizens should intervene to prevent someone from being harmed. After one of the Ellington students described a time when his mother had done just that, his classmates expressed their admiration for her.

Margaret Feinstein feels that she and the other Dickstein volunteers are well rewarded for the five to 6 hours a month they devote to the Ellington roundtables. "Interacting with the students is so stimulating, and it has given us an opportunity to become friends with people in the firm that we would not have got to know through our legal responsibilities."

School Without Walls Students Prepared for Model UN By Fried Frank Partner

When eight students from the School Without Walls needed guidance to prepare for the Model UN Conference on Failed States in South Africa, the school called on **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**. David Birenbaum, a partner at the firm who had been an ambassador to the United Nations during the Clinton administration, came to the school and worked with the students on their presentations. "By asking questions about their arguments, he really engaged the students," says Sylvia Isaac, assistant principal. "He also gave them great tips to make their closing statements effective."

Diversity Teleconference Brings Cleveland Students To Holland & Knight (cont'd)

During a pizza lunch, the students prepared questions. At the teleconference, they had an opportunity to ask the author the following questions: How did you get involved in civil rights action? Have you ever been a school teacher? The students were interested to learn that Charles Cobb does teach at Brown University.

PARTNERSHIPS

Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld

Tyler Elementary School

Arent Fox

Randle Highlands Elementary School

Beveridge & Diamond

Savoy Elementary School

Bracewell & Giuliani

Brightwood Elementary School

Brown Rudnick

Whittier Education Center

Covington & Burling

Cardozo Senior High School

Dickstein Shapiro

Ellington School of the Arts

Drinker, Biddle & Reath

Ann Beers Elementary School

Epstein, Becker & Green

Emery Educational Center

Fannie Mae's Corporate Legal Dept.

Marie H. Reed Learning Center

Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson

School Without Walls

Fulbright & Jaworski

Macfarland Middle School

Holland & Knight

Cleveland Elementary School

Howrey

Bancroft Elementary School

McDermott, Will & Emery

Amidon-Bowen Elementary School

Patton BoggsFrancis Stevens Educational
Campus**Pepper Hamilton**

Stanton Elementary School

Reed SmithBruce Monroe at Park View
Elementary School**Sidley Austin**

Thomson Elementary School

Steptoe & Johnson

Montgomery Elementary School

Sutherland Asbill & BrennanBell Multicultural Senior
High School**U.S. Courts for the District of
Columbia Circuit**

J.O. Wilson Elementary School

Williams & Connolly

Dunbar Senior High School

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Roderic V.O. Boggs
Executive Director

Washington Lawyers' Committee
for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Da'aga Hill Bowman, Director

Foundation Outreach and Public Information

Elinor Hart, Editor

**Washington Lawyers' Committee
for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs**

11 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 319-1000
WWW.WASHLAW.ORG

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Epstein Becker & Green Introduces Legal Legends To Emery Students (cont'd)

For Kathy Merrill and Amy Simmons, who coordinate the Breakfast with a Legend Program for their firm, this activity requires a modest time commitment, yet it is very rewarding for both law firm volunteers and Emery students. Other Epstein, Becker & Green volunteers who were involved in this activity include Maura Farrell, Ross Friedberg, Dan Gottlieb, Bill Kopit, Julia Loyd, Joel Rush, Deepa Selvam, and Dawn Welch.

D.C. Public School Partnerships Project's

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