

# Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board

D.C. Public School Partnerships Project  
of the Washington Lawyers' Committee  
for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Spring 2008

## April Summit Focuses on Expanding School Partnerships

Dozens of attorneys, school officials, and representatives of businesses and nonprofit organizations came together at **Arent Fox** on April 24 to share school partnership experiences and explore possibilities for increasing the number of partnerships. School Chancellor Michelle Rhee set the tone by expressing her enthusiasm for school partnerships and her strong interest in continuing collaboration between the D.C. Public Schools administration and the Washington Lawyers' Committee.

Other highlights of the summit were the panel presentations about model partnerships. Stan Samorajczyk of **Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld** and Christine Ladd of **Fannie Mae's** Legal Department described their successful partnerships with elementary schools. Jennifer Tribulski and

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*Alan Vollman presents Poetry Trophy to Shelby Coley*

## Poetry Program at Banneker Supported by Holland & Knight Marks Fourth and Finest Year

On March 4, the poetry recited by 15 Banneker High School finalists won the admiration of their peers, their teachers and a panel of judges from **Holland & Knight** as the students brought the words and images of a variety of American and international poets to life. Teachers, judges and students all agreed: This fourth year of Banneker's Poetry Out Loud program was by far the best.

Four years ago, the head of the English Department, Wendy Warren, initiated Banneker's participation in Poetry Out Loud, the national poetry reading competition sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. Each year, Holland & Knight has provided a handsome program, judges, a winner's trophy plus certificates, and a hardcover poetry anthology for the finalists.

*(Continued on page 8)*

# IRIS'

# INTRO



*IRIS J. TOYER*  
*Project Director, D.C. Public School Partnerships*  
*Project, Washington Lawyers' Committee*

What a year this has been! Law firm partnerships are making a difference in the lives of students at our partnership schools in so many ways!

We began the school year with our Third Annual GeoPlunge Challenge Tournament supported by more than 60 law firm and individual sponsors. We joined with the D.C. Public Schools system and recruited 46 elementary and middle schools to participate in the event. Read about this great success on page 4.

In this environment of school reform and change, we learned that nine of our schools will be impacted by school closings and restructuring efforts mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act. We have invited our guest columnist, Randy Rich of **Bracewell & Guiliani**, to discuss on page 3 how his firm approached the issue when their partner school closed.

Our page 1 story details the efforts we have undertaken this year to expand the number of school partnerships. We took a more aggressive approach and, with the assistance of **Arent Fox** and D.C. Public Schools, we hosted a Partnership Summit in late April. If you missed it, read all about it.

Our partnership firms continue to do great work with our young people. For example, read about **Holland & Knight's** support of Banneker High School's Poetry Out Loud program. Our story, beginning on page 1, paints a vivid picture of how high-school students connect with a literary form and see it as an "exciting opportunity."

**Health Right, Inc.**, one of our non-law firm partners invited students from Ferebee-Hope Elementary School to help create its new logo. The story on page 9 is an interesting read.

Firms continue to provide resources for their school partners. **Howrey's** assistance to Bancroft and **Bracewell & Giuliani's** Garage Sale are shining examples of ways to support schools.

New to our family of school partnerships is **Dechert LLP** and Ross Elementary School. The firm and school are making plans for a successful year.

I invite your firm to get involved and make a difference!

## Iris

Iris J. Toyer  
Director  
D.C. Public School Partnerships Project

# FORGING A NEW P

# A R T N E R S H I P

With the planned closing of many D.C. Public Schools, some law firms that have spent years developing relationships with "their school" now will be faced with the prospect of forming new school partnerships.

Never fear; as much as you may miss your old school, our firm's experience demonstrates that the students, teachers and administrators at your new school will welcome you and your firm's support.

For several years, **Bracewell & Giuliani** partnered with Van Ness Elementary School. Van Ness was located on M Street Southeast at the edge of Capitol Hill and across the street from the Navy Yard.

As large public housing complexes were demolished and gentrification began to set in, enrollment at Van Ness declined. An already needy school became even more needy as student-teacher ratios fell and budgets were cut. Ultimately, Van Ness succumbed.

Shortly before Van Ness closed, and before most of the attorneys and staff at Bracewell & Giuliani that supported Van Ness learned of its fate, the Washington Lawyers' Committee sprang into action.

The Committee's D.C. Public School Partnerships Project Director Iris Troyer called to offer a relationship with another school, Brightwood Elementary School in northwest Washington. We had a special place in our hearts for Van Ness, but our introduction to Brightwood helped us to move forward.

Brightwood has an energetic principal and grateful students. We immediately picked up where we had left off with Van Ness.



*Randall S. Rich  
Partner  
Bracewell & Giuliani*

We held a "Big Book Party" for Brightwood's fifth grade, complete with dramatic readings, games, fun and goodie bags for each student.

The transition was seamless, thanks to Iris Toyer and Principal Wanda Fox.

We now have a great relationship with Brightwood, even though we will never forget Van Ness.

Similarly, you will always remember your first school partnership, but will find your new relationship to be engaging, challenging and, most of all, emotionally rewarding.



*GeoPlunge Team*

## **46 Elementary Schools Compete In Third GeoPlunge Tournament**

Nearly 200 enthusiastic fifth- and sixth-graders from 46 D.C. public elementary schools arrived at Bell Multicultural High School on November 29, 2007 to compete in the Third Annual GeoPlunge Challenge Tournament.

Morning rounds of GeoPlunge games determined the seeding for playoff rounds following a lunch provided by over 60 sponsors. At the conclusion of the championship round, students on the J. O. Wilson Elementary School team were declared the GeoPlunge III Tournament winners.

GeoPlunge is played with a set of cards, each representing one of the 50 states. The tournament included three different games that combine geography education and fun.

*Guess the State* encourages students to learn the names of the 50 states. Playing *Race for the Borders* teaches participants where states are located geographically. When students *Play the Ranks*, they learn how the states rank in size, population and order of entry into the union.

Alan Fishel, a partner at **Arent Fox**, invented the geography games and created the set of GeoPlunge cards. GeoPlunge was well received at Randle Highlands Elementary, where Arent Fox as a school partnership. So, Alan and his law firm colleagues persuaded the Washington Lawyers' Committee to co-sponsor the first two GeoPlunge tournaments in the spring and fall of 2006. These tournaments proved so successful that students eagerly asked: "When is the next one?"

The Committee's School Partnerships Project Director Iris Toyer, Alan Fishel, and other volunteers from Arent Fox organized the day-long tournament. Staff from Bell Multicultural High School and the office of Chancellor Michelle Rhee provided invaluable support. The tournament's principal sponsors were the Washington Lawyers' Committee and the law firm of Arent Fox.

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Nine Partnership Schools To Be Affected By Restructuring

At the end of the 2007-08 school year, the D.C. Public School system will close five elementary schools that currently have partnerships with law firms, and reassign the children who now attend these schools.

Bowen Elementary School students will attend Amidon Elementary School.

Students at Gage-Eckington Elementary School will be divided among Cleveland and Emery Elementary Schools.

Park View Elementary School students will attend Bruce-Monroe Elementary School.

Students at Stevens Elementary School will move to what is now Francis Junior High School, and over the summer, Francis will become a K-8 school.

Finally, Wilkinson Elementary School students are being reassigned to Moten Elementary School.

The schools to which additional students are being assigned will have enhanced academic programs.

According to Mayor Adrian Fenty and Chancellor Michelle Rhee, the schools are being right-sized to ensure that all resources are focused on supporting academic programs while eliminating expenses used for excess space.

*(Continued on page 9)*



*Michelle A. Rhee  
Chancellor  
District of Columbia Public Schools*

## April Summit Focuses on Expanding School Partnerships (cont'd)

William James of **Patton Boggs** explained how their long-term relationship with Francis Junior High School has developed and continues to evolve. The presentations of Sidney Dickstein from **Dickstein Shapiro** and Alan Pemberton of **Covington & Burling** about their partnerships with Ellington School of the Arts and Cardozo Senior High School respectively revealed a broad range of possibilities for working with older students.

In addition to those who have been involved in school partnerships for a number of years, representatives from law firms and other businesses considering school partnerships were an important part of the summit. Since the summit, the Committee has been working with a number of these businesses to form new partnerships. The consensus of those who attended the summit was that it was a valuable experience and should be repeated soon again.



*GeoPlunge Team*

# ESPRIT

# LE M E N T A R Y



*Wilkinson Elementary School students attend a tutoring session at Foley & Lardner.*

## **Wilkinson Students Tutored at Foley & Lardner**

Every Wednesday, 34 third-graders from Wilkinson Elementary School come to **Foley & Lardner** for tutoring. The students, who participate in Wilkinson's after-school program, are brought to Foley in a bus chartered by the firm. The third-graders are met by 15 to 20 tutors who work with the students in pairs.

"Working with their peers helps students learn," reports Kari Reents, who coordinates Foley's tutoring program. Kari feels she is fortunate to be the one who fills in for absent tutors because this gives her an opportunity to get to know more of the Wilkinson students, who she says are "great kids." Reading and math exercises of varying difficulty are provided by the school, and tutors select specific exercises to meet the skill level of each student.

Foley and its school partner Wilkinson also have an important creative relationship. Every year, Wilkinson students submit drawings for the firm's holiday card art competition. The contest is followed by a pizza and awards party.

At the party, the student who creates the winning drawing receives a \$500 savings bond. In addition, the firm also awards \$400 and \$300 savings bonds to the students who place second and third in the competition. The three winners receive framed copies of their artwork.

Foley & Lardner encourages Wilkinson students to continue working on their reading skills over the summer. The firm conducted a book drive this spring. At the final tutoring session of the 2007-08 school year, Foley tutors helped the Wilkinson students pick out their own books for summer reading.

## Brightwood Elementary Benefits From Garage Sale At Bracewell & Giuliani

Shortly after forging a new partnership with Brightwood Elementary School, **Bracewell & Giuliani** turned no-longer-needed equipment and office furniture at the firm into much-needed classroom and playground equipment for its new partner school.

The firm sold its older but useful office equipment and furniture during a fall garage sale, raising \$600. The funds were used to purchase large bags of balls and other playground equipment, which the firm presented to each classroom at Brightwood.

Bracewell & Giuliani's tradition of an annual Big Book Party to promote reading was developed at Van Ness Elementary School, one of the schools that recently closed. The Book Party has proved to be an equally big success at Brightwood. The Big Book party has also been very well received by students and teachers in other cities where the firm has offices.

### Escuela Primaria Bancroft



### Manual de la Familia 2007-2008

Calles 18 y Newton, Noroeste  
Washington, Distrito de Columbia 20010  
202-673-7280



*Volunteers Deliver Playground Equipment*

## Howrey Publishes Trilingual Handbook For Bancroft Elementary

At the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, **Howrey** published a handbook for families at its partner school, Bancroft Elementary. Because the school has so many children whose languages at home are Spanish and Vietnamese, the handbook was published in these languages as well as in English.

The handbook includes such basic information as school hours and the school calendar. It also has important information about how parents can be involved in the school and in their children's education, as well as contact information for the teachers and staff who work at the school.

The core of Howrey's partnership with Bancroft is a tutoring program that provides 35 tutors—enough for the school's entire fifth grade.

At the end of every school year, Howrey tutors take the fifth grade on a field trip. In 2007, they went to the U.S. Capitol. This year, they visited a courthouse.

This spring, Howrey also conducted a special clothing drive to help the families of 10 Bancroft children. These families were displaced and lost everything, including their homes, in a five-alarm fire that destroyed their Mount Pleasant apartment building.

# CREATIVE

# ON N E C T I O N S



*Holland & Knight Partnership Coordinator and Panel of Poetry Judges with winner*

## **Sounds of Poetry Fill Banneker High School (cont'd)**

Whitney Warren is particularly grateful for the panel of judges from the law firm and the program, designed by Yvette Luster at Holland & Knight and printed by the firm. "The program is itself a work of art, says Ms. Warren. "It is wonderful to have a panel of outside judges from a prestigious law firm. We are confident that the judging is unbiased, and the winners of the competition feel especially honored."

Ms. Warren got great help from her colleagues in the English Department—Leo Bowman, Olu Burrell, Charles Feeser, and Jacque Leighty. Students in every English class were required to select, memorize, and recite a poem from the very comprehensive collection published on the National Endowment's website. Even though participation was a requirement, the majority of Banneker students did not view the poetry competition as drudgery. They saw it as an exciting opportunity.

"Recitation increases my appreciation of poetry. I felt so much passion when I recited my poem," said one of Charles Feeser's students. "I felt the pain, the anger, and the joy of my poet in my recitation," said another student, while a third student expressed that "reciting poems is so much better than just reading a piece of paper. It brings the poem to life, and it makes you gasp."

Mr. Feeser also pointed to the less tangible benefits of Holland & Knight's support. "It shows that the community is interested in what our students do," he explained. "This strong community support makes it easier to promote the competition in our individual classes."

Alan Vollmann, a former English teacher, is the Holland & Knight partner who coordinates the firm's partnership activities at Banneker. The Poetry Out Loud Program has a special place in his heart.

*(Continued on page 10)*





*Brian Rucker*

## **Nine Partnership Schools To Be Affected By Restructuring (cont'd)**

At the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, there will be new principals at four schools that have law firm partnerships—Stanton Elementary School; MacFarland Middle School; and Dunbar and Woodson Senior High Schools.

Tips for developing new school relationships can be found in the Washington Lawyers' Committee's school partnership handbook, *School by School: Child by Child*.

The handbook is available on the Washington Lawyers' Committee website: [www.washlaw.org](http://www.washlaw.org).

## **Ferebee-Hope Students Help Develop New Logo for Health Right, Inc.**

As **Health Right, Inc.**, prepared to adopt a new logo, the corporation invited third- and fifth-graders at Ferebee-Hope Elementary School to create posters that would provide ideas for Health Right's new logo and to write essays about the theme of the new logo, the tree of health. After the students created their posters and essays, Health Right awarded prizes. The first-place winner received \$75. The second- and third-place winners received \$50 and \$25 respectively.

## **46 Elementary Schools Compete In Third GeoPlunge Tournament (cont'd)**

The following law firms, Committee board members, other individual attorneys, and friends of the school partnerships sponsored GeoPlunge teams for the Tournament: **Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld; Arent, Fox; Baach Robinson & Lewis; Baker & McKenzie; J. Douglas Baldrige; Edward K.M. Bilich; Quinton Bowman; Bracewell & Giuliani; Brian Busey; Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft; Chadbourne & Parke; Andrew Clubok; Guy Collier; David Cynamon; Fannie Mae's Corporate Legal Department; Fight For Children; Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner; Epstein Becker & Green; Ron Flagg; Phil Fornaci;**

*(Continued on page 12)*



*Whitney Warren*



*Alexandria Wash*

## **Banneker Students Embrace Poetry (cont'd)**

"What I love about the Poetry Out Loud program is that it is a great motivator, said Mr. Vollmann. "I am impressed how kids take ownership of the poems they pick. Poetry memorization and recitation had gone out of style. But teaching poetry without letting the kids pick poems they love is like teaching culinary arts from menus without letting the kids taste the food. Once they find something that tastes good to them, they want more of it. At the performance, I always see how the kids love the feel of the words in their mouths as they discover the subtle rhythms of the language. I have never seen a more successful program to get students interested in poetry. In fact, this program makes them passionate about poetry. It is incredible."

The students indeed take ownership of their poems by selecting which ones to recite, usually considering a dozen or more before deciding on the right poem. The selection process often involves research on a number of poets. In many cases, students develop a strong affinity for the author of their poem. Alexandria Walsh, who recited "Scary Movies" by Kim Addonizio, believes she has discovered a poet whose vision of life she shares. Shelby Coley, the winner of this year's poetry competition at Banneker, attributes much of her success to her selection of Carl Sandburg's "Chicago." She felt she really understood the poem, because she had read Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, which also captures the raw excitement of Chicago at the turn of the 20th century. She also welcomed the opportunity to convey the energy in Sandburg's poem.

Shelby not only won the Poetry Out Loud competition at Banneker. She also won the citywide competition. She was not able to represent the District in the national Poetry Out Loud finals, because they conflicted with a national Shakespeare recitation competition in which she represented the District of Columbia. In the national Shakespeare competition, she finished in the top ten.

Expectations are high for future Poetry Out Loud competitions at Banneker. The freshman finalists who did so well this year will have three years to improve their performance. The Poetry Out Loud pictures this year were taken by Marvin Spinner, who teaches computer science at Banneker.



*Ian Coleman*

## PARTNERSHIPS

### **Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld**

Tyler Elementary School

### **Arent Fox**

Randle Highlands Elementary School

### **Baker & McKenzie**

Payne Elementary School

### **Beveridge & Diamond**

Birney Elementary School

### **Bracewell & Giuliani**

Brightwood Elementary School

### **Covington & Burling**

Cardozo Senior High School

### **Dechert LLP**

Ross Elementary School

### **Dickstein Shapiro**

Ellington School of the Arts

### **Fannie Mae's Corporate Legal Dept.**

Marie H. Reed Learning Center

### **Foley & Lardner**

Wilkinson Elementary School

### **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**

School Without Walls

### **Fulbright & Jaworski**

Macfarland Middle School

### **Greater Washington Area Chapter -**

### **Women Lawyers Division -**

### **National Bar Association**

Malcolm X Elementary School

### **Health Right, Inc.**

H.D. Cooke Elementary School

Ferebee-Hope Elementary School

LaSalle Elementary School

Lincoln Junior High School

# F I R M S C H O O L S

### **Holland & Knight**

Banneker Senior High School

Cleveland Elementary School

### **Howrey**

Bancroft Elementary School

### **Kilpatrick Stockton**

Sousa Middle School

### **McDermott, Will & Emery**

Bowen Elementary School

### **Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw**

Gage-Eckington Elementary School

### **The Office of the Attorney General, District of Columbia**

Walker Jones/R.H. Terrell

Education Center

### **Patton Boggs**

Francis Junior High School

### **Pepper Hamilton**

Stanton Elementary School

### **Reed Smith**

Park View Elementary School

### **Sidley Austin**

Thomson Elementary School

### **Spriggs & Hollingsworth**

Jefferson Junior High School

### **Steptoe & Johnson**

Montgomery Elementary School

### **Sutherland Asbill & Brennan**

Bell Multicultural Senior High School

### **U.S. Courts for the District of Columbia Circuit**

J.O. Wilson Elementary School

### **Washington Bar Association - Young Lawyers' Division**

Banneker Senior High School

Ballou Senior High School

### **Weil, Gotshal & Manges**

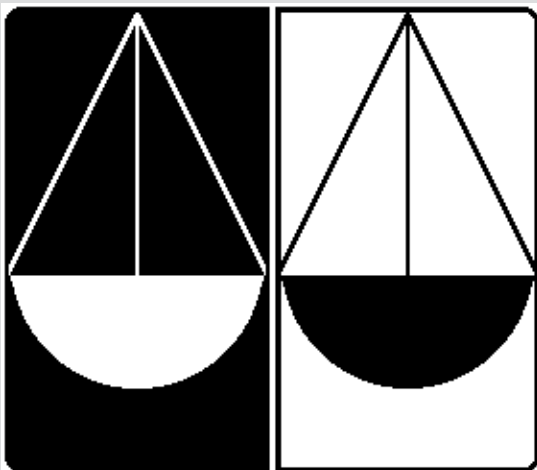
Noyes Elementary School

### **Williams & Connolly**

Dunbar Senior High School

### **Winston & Strawn**

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D.C. Public School Partnerships Project's

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## **GeoPlunge Sponsors (cont'd)**

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The Washington Lawyers' Committee, Arent Fox, and school officials are now planning a fourth GeoPlunge Tournament, which is expected to take place in November 2008 and involve teams of students from as many as 100 schools.

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