

# Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board

Spring  
2009



*Tracy Davis from Bracewell & Giuliani and a Brightwood Elementary student remove a dead bush from the school grounds.*

## Four New Partnerships Active At Elementary, Middle Schools

Over the past year, law firms have launched busy partnerships at four D.C. public schools. Last fall, **Brown Rudnick** had a successful winter clothing drive for every grade at its partner school, Whittier Education Center. The firm collected coats and other warm clothing for students in every grade from pre-K to sixth grade. This spring, volunteers from the firm took students on a tour of the Capitol. Plans for the coming school year include bringing Whittier students to the firm for a tour, lunch, and a variety of other activities.

The tutoring effort that **Dow Lohnes** began at Kelly Miller Middle School will continue during summer school. Revamping the school library is at the top of the firm's to-do list for the school. Fundraising for this project and a book drive are planned for the 2009-2010 school year. The firm is also developing a social and professional etiquette education project to help boys at the school prepare to apply for D.C.'s summer jobs program.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Bracewell & Giuliani Brings Landscaping To Partner School

**Bracewell & Giuliani's** landscaping project at Brightwood Elementary School in May was so successful that it promises to become an annual activity. This year, the firm's traditional family spring outing had a new focus—sprucing up the grounds at Bracewell's partner school.

Through a jewelry sale and the "Cooking for Kids" bake sale at the firm, Bracewell raised \$400 for mulch and plants. Bracewell attorneys, staff, and their children also put a lot of sweat equity into weeding and removing dead plants. It truly was a partnership activity. Brightwood's principal, administrative staff, custodian, soccer coach, along with his undefeated team, also pitched in. The school provided coffee, juice and sweet rolls to help everyone get going in the morning and pizza to reward them for their hard work.

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**IRIS J. TOYER**

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

Let me begin by saying that the children in the D.C. Public Schools are tremendously fortunate to have the caring and committed law firm volunteers who work in our schools weekly and monthly without fail. Many of our principals attribute the increases in student achievement in part to the support from our partnerships' tutors and mentors.

Law firms have taken on the challenge of increasing literacy throughout all grade levels. They provide books for libraries, incentives to encourage reading, books to individual students and, in some instances, they have built or renovated libraries!

**Fannie Mae's Corporate Legal Department** has developed a financial literacy course, which their volunteers have taught to sixth graders at Marie Reed Learning Center. It was so successful that now parents are interested in participating in the classes as well.

This year, a number of our high school partners were winners in the citywide mock trial competition. As attorneys from partner firms coached the teams, they helped students understand legal concepts. Read how several of our firms are encouraging these students to develop analytical and oratorical skills, as well as self-confidence.

Our volunteer firms have not limited their efforts to classroom activities. **Steptoe and Johnson** supported the efforts of its partner school's production of *Pinocchio*. This activity not only touched the children at the school, but also the community that turned out to watch this fine production. Who knows--maybe they included future Oscar winners honing their acting skills.

I am pleased to announce four new partnerships this year. **Epstein, Becker & Green** is busy at work at Emery Educational Center. When the firm arrived at the school it was a pre-K-5 school. Now it has been transformed to pre-K-8. **Drinker, Biddle & Reath** launched a partnership with Anne Beers Elementary School located in far Southeast Washington. **Brown Rudnick** began an energetic partnership with Whittier Education Center, another pre-K-8 school. **Dow Lohnes** is busily working with the students at Kelly Miller Middle School.

Finally, I would like to thank every firm and each volunteer for making my job an enjoyable one. Together, we have helped thousands of students in D.C. Public Schools to know that there is a caring community that wants them to succeed. This will be my last column. While I am leaving the Committee, the work of this project will continue through your efforts to help our city's children see a brighter day. I am honored to have worked with such a great group of folks!

*Iris*

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

Several years ago, **Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld** established the not-for-profit Akin Gump School Partnership Project to support and fund its long-standing partnership with the John Tyler Elementary School in Southeast Washington.

Stan Samorajczyk founded and presided over the Partnership for over a decade until his retirement from Akin Gump in 2008, after which I became President.

Anchoring the partnership during Stan's tenure and continuing today is the tutoring program, which matches Akin Gump personnel with Tyler students in need of additional academic help. Tyler Principal Terry Dade reports that the tutoring program has helped students improve their school work and performance on the District of Columbia annual achievement tests.

Among the many other Tyler initiatives to which Akin Gump personnel have volunteered and contributed financially are: a major library renovation project completed in 2007; academic and summer enrichment scholarships; transportation for student field trips; catering for back-to-school and parent-teacher conference nights; and an annual holiday party, fun fair and other special events for students.

The Partnership is currently assisting Tyler community volunteers with construction of an outdoor classroom, which will feature natural habitats to enable hands-on ecological and environmental learning for Tyler students on campus.

The Partnership is helping raise and manage funds for the project and regularly participates with the project sponsors, the D.C. Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, and grantors to the project to oversee its execution. Akin Gump volunteers also have helped with initial tree and flower plantings for the project.



*Charles W. Johnson IV  
Partner  
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld*

Additionally, Akin Gump's 2009 Summer Associate class will teach a day-long financial literacy lesson to Tyler students in June through a program sponsored by Junior Achievement of the National Capital Area.

Akin Gump has also continued to host the Washington Lawyers' Committee's partnership lunch meetings.

These three meetings per year, to which all partnership coordinators are invited, have given me and others at the firm an opportunity to learn about the activities of other school partnerships, and to benefit from working with the Committee and Iris Toyer, who has done a wonderful job of directing the school partnership project.



*Cooking for Kids judges assess Taste-Off pastries. L/R Jean Nathan, author of award-winning cookbooks; Chris Floyd, Founder and Director of Capital Restaurant Resources; Emma Floyd; Chip Krueger, food enthusiast; Iris Toyer, Director, D.C. Public School Partnerships Project.*

## Six Law Firms Win Top Taste-Off Prizes

The 2009 Cooking for Kids Taste-Off brought forth delicious pies, cakes, and cookies from eight law firms and the Washington Lawyers' Committee. The pastries were assessed and evaluated by two distinguished judges: Christopher Floyd and Joan Nathan.

Chris Floyd is the Founder and Director of Capital Restaurant Resources, a boutique hospitality management recruiting firm based in Washington, D.C. He is a D.C. native with 15 years of experience working in all aspects of the hospitality business in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and New York.

Joan Nathan is the author of award-winning cookbooks and the host of the acclaimed PBS series *Jewish Cooking in America*. She is an internationally recognized expert on food culture and a 2001 inductee into *Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America* by the James Beard Foundation.

First place in the pie category went to Kate Wersinger from **Step toe & Johnson** for her classic apple pie. Close second- and third-place winners in that category were pecan pie tartlets by Andrew McLain from **Bracewell & Giuliani**, and coconut custard pie by Alida Barleta from **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**.

Step toe also took top honors in the cake category with Kim Treadwell's carrot cake. Second- and third-place cake winners were the pineapple upside-down cake baked by Cynthia Simpson from **Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld**, and the nuttin' apple cake baked by Rosita Williams from **Bracewell & Giuliani**.

In the cookie competition, the first-place winners were world peace cookies created by John Jacob at Akin Gump. The original chocolate chip cookie baked by Deborah Salons from **Drinker, Biddle & Reath** came in second. Brownies baked by Mark Duvall from **Beveridge & Diamond** came in third.

Although the pastries from **Arent Fox** and **Mintz Levin** were not official prize winners, their high quality was recognized by the judges as well as the staff of the Washington Lawyers' Committee.

## J. O. Wilson Again Winner In 4th GeoPlunge Tournament

A team of young geography whizzes from J.O. Wilson Elementary School swept the 4th Annual GeoPlunge Geography Tournament at Columbia Heights Education Center (formerly Bell Multicultural High School) to give the school its second straight GeoPlunge Championship last Friday.

The winning J.O. Wilson trio prevailed over 47 other teams from nearly 40 D.C. public schools and earned the right to display the GeoPlunge Championship Cup at their school for another year. The defending champs defeated Eaton Elementary in a thrilling final. Tubman Elementary finished third, with Seaton Elementary taking fourth to round out the top four.

GeoPlunge is an award-winning set of geography games created by **Arent Fox** attorney Alan Fishel. The Washington Lawyers' Committee and D.C. Public Schools, along with Arent Fox, organize the annual tournament, which is sponsored by dozens of local law firms and businesses.

Nearly 150 fourth- fifth- and sixth-grade students from across Washington, D.C., competed on their schools' teams in this year's tournament, which was opened by D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee, who welcomed the students at the start of the competition.

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 4th Annual GeoPlunge tournament was made possible by the generosity of the following sponsors: **Arent Fox; Baker & McKenzie; Mr. & Ms. Lee Berger; Bracewell & Giuliani; Rod Boggs; Brown Rudnick; Bob Bruskin; Don Kahl; Barry Buchman; G. Brian Bussey; Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft; H. Guy Collier; Crowell & Moring; Dataprise, Inc; Epstein Becker & Green; Mark Fleischaker; Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver, & Jacobson; Goodwin Procter; Gray Plant & Mooty; Stephen F. Hanlon; Thomas Hentoff; Holland & Knight; Michael Kimsey; Holland & Knight; Benjamin B. Klubes; Thomas Knox; The Meltzer Group; Gerald Norton; April Oliver; Gilbert Oshinsky; John Poole; Reed Smith; Randall S. Rich; Jeffrey D. Robinson; Marilyn Schuyler; Earl Silbert; Paul Smith; Denise Vanison; Robert Wald; Willard Intercontinental Hotel; David Williams; Benjamin Wilson; Alan Wiseman; and Zuckerman Spaeder.**



*GeoPlunge champions from J.O. Wilson Elementary School.*

## Top Street Law Honors Again Won by Partner Schools

The results of this spring's Mock Trial Competition sponsored by the Street Law Program at Georgetown University gave several law firm bragging rights.

The top winner in the 2009 Mock Trial Tournament was Bell Multicultural High School, coached by Kelley Miller, Chris Hammond, and other first-year associates at **Sutherland**. The Bell Prosecution Team managed to prevail against a formidable Defense Team from the School Without Walls. The coaches for the Walls students were Tommy Beadreau and other attorneys from **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Fannie Mae Brings Financial Literacy To Marie Reed

Attorneys from **Fannie Mae's Corporate Legal Department** have developed a financial literacy course which they teach to sixth-graders at the Marie Reed Learning Center.

The course covers budgeting, credit, and investment. It is taught in one-hour, weekly segments over the course of three weeks. Using available resources, the Fannie Mae instructors customized games, videos and other course materials for their Marie Reed students.

The course was so popular that parents of Marie Reed students have also expressed interest in taking the financial literacy class. Fannie Mae instructors are now looking into offering the course to Marie Reed parents as well.

# C R E A T I V E

# O N N E C T I O N S



*Arent Fox attorneys and staff judge Landmark Art created by Randle Highlands students. L/R Eric Suggs, Josh Favin, Catina Parker, Maurice Henson, Karen Ancharski.*

## **Creativity, History, and Fun Come Together In Arent Fox's Landmark Arts Project**

The Landmark Arts Project that **Arent Fox** brought to Randle Highlands Elementary School made it possible for students to learn history while having fun and expressing their creativity. Each class at the school was assigned a Washington landmark.

Pre-K and kindergarten students had the White House; first-graders had the Washington Monument; second-graders were assigned the Frederick Douglass' home and National Historic Site; third-graders had Mary McLeod Bethune's home and Council House; fourth-graders were given Union Station; fifth-graders had the U.S. Capitol; and sixth-graders were assigned the Supreme Court.

After the landmarks were assigned, attorneys and staff from Arent Fox visited each classroom at Randle Highlands and taught a lesson about the landmark assigned to that class.

Attorney Marcia Durkin, for example, along with another volunteer from the firm taught three first-grade classes about the Washington Monument and its namesake, George Washington, using photographs and interactive exercises to engage the students.

In one exercise, called Fib or Fact, students learned historical facts about George Washington, and that what one hears about famous people is not always true. Thirty volunteers from the firm took part in the teaching phase at Randle Highlands.

At the conclusion of the landmark classes, the students created art work about the landmarks. The artwork was then displayed in one of the firm's conference rooms. At Arent Fox, attorneys and staff voted on the best artwork. The three winners from each grade came to a pizza party at the firm. During the party, students and Arent Fox volunteers watched a slide show of the winning pictures.

## Akin Gump Helps Make Outdoor Classroom Reality for Tyler

**Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld** is proud of its support of Tyler Elementary School, whose students have shown remarkable improvement over the past decade. The firm's tutoring program and support for teacher training helped to raise students' test scores. The internet wiring and library makeover that Akin Gump brought to the school is an important contribution to its positive learning environment.

These days, the firm is excited about its involvement in a project that will transform an acre of asphalt behind the school into an outdoor classroom.

The official name of the effort is School Yard Project: Urban Learning through Outdoor Play, Sustainability and Watershed Protection. After it was conceived by a group of parents, some of whom had architecture and urban planning experience, it was warmly embraced by the school administration and faculty and by Akin Gump.

The firm set up a nonprofit organization that made it possible for the parents to raise over \$160,000. Their nonprofit organization was awarded three major grants totaling \$140,000, and they raised an additional \$20,000 to \$30,000 in small grants and donations. They also succeeded in securing such valuable in-kind donations as the demolition and removal of the asphalt and new playground equipment.

Charlie Johnson from Akin Gump is working closely with the parents to make sure their nonprofit organization is complying with the legal requirements of the grants. Erika Lehman, one of the project's key parents, says, "I don't know what we would do without him. He makes it possible for us to come up with the necessary documentation to be in compliance with these grants."

The project got underway last fall with the planting of new trees and plants along what will be one of the borders of the outdoor classroom. This



*Tyler Elementary students climb on compost that will become part of the outdoor classroom.*

summer the asphalt will be removed, and a green playground for young children will be installed. Planting will be resumed in the fall and will continue for several years.

Tyler's School Yard project has been endorsed by the school system, the National Wildlife Federation, the Anacostia Watershed Society, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Ward 6 D.C. Councilmember Tommy Wells.

## Step toe & Johnson Helps Scott Montgomery With School Play

In May, **Step toe & Johnson** helped Scott Montgomery Elementary School present a performance of Pinocchio for school parents, neighbors, and others from the community.

Volunteers from the firm helped with costumes, make-up, props, and many other tasks involved in putting on the play.

The firm also provided popcorn, candy, sodas and juices for the concession stand where members of the audience bought refreshments before and after the performance and during intermission.

At the end of the evening, Step toe had earned \$250 for Scott Montgomery Elementary School.



*Amy Lincoln and Svetlana Peskoff from Beveridge & Diamond clean and paint Birney Elementary School's new library*

## **Beveridge & Diamond Brings New Library To Birney Elementary**

Improving the environment is a dominant theme in the partnership between the law firm of **Beveridge & Diamond** and Birney Elementary School. Ten years ago, attorneys in the firm's environmental practice launched an environmental course that teaches students about pollution and how to reduce it. A couple of years ago, the firm undertook a library renovation project that brought improvements to both the physical and academic environments in the school.

Birney had no library, but on the second floor was a dusty, good-sized room that for at least five years had served as a glorified closet. Extensive cleaning and painting by volunteers from Beveridge and Diamond transformed the grimy storage area into a bright space for the school library. The school's principal, Charles Webb, was particularly impressed with the effort that managing partner, Ben Wilson, put into painting the library space. According to the principal, the law firm is an invaluable resource for the school in many ways.

To help stock the new library, Beveridge & Diamond had a holiday gift drive, during which employees at the firm gave books as well as money for books and other library materials.

Local school dollars, federal funds, and a donation from Toyota also helped to stock the library.

Jean DeLeon, a school volunteer, who had tutored many children at the school, had a feel for the kinds of books that would interest Birney students, and she provided valuable guidance in developing the library collection. For example, she perceived that Birney students are especially fascinated by snakes. And today, the library's books in greatest demand are those about snakes.

This past school year, students from Savoy Elementary School are also going to school in the Birney school building, because Savoy is being renovated. These students are already benefiting from Birney's library collection. This summer, Birney will be closed. Next fall, Birney students, along with the school's library collection, will go to Savoy, and Beveridge and Diamond's new school partner will be Savoy Elementary School.



## Variety of Fried Frank Efforts Promote Literacy At School Without Walls

Even though the School Without Walls is one of the area's highest-achieving schools, supporting literacy at the school is an important tradition for its partner firm, **Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson**.

Every year, the faculty at Walls, as the school is often called, recognizes students who read 25 books or more on the school's reading list. The reading list is tweaked every summer to accommodate new books. It includes fiction and non-fiction as well as classics and contemporary books.

For the past nine years, the students have received their reading awards during a late spring event at the firm. This annual program at Fried Frank has grown from an occasion for recognizing the school's avid readers into an impressive event.

The school now uses it to make all of its end-of-the-year awards and to recognize graduating seniors who have received scholarships. Immediately after the awards program, the firm also hosts a reception for the Walls students and their teachers and parents. This year, Fried Frank will be giving the students gift cards.

Fried Frank also supports literacy at Walls with book drives and by reading senior papers. Recently, attorneys and staff brought used books to the firm. After the school librarian selected the books that could be used at Walls, the firm had a used book sale with the remaining books. The proceeds of the sale were given to the school to buy books on its wish list.

One way the School Without Walls works to develop a high degree of literacy in its students is by requiring them to do a significant amount of writing that includes a senior research paper. Fried Frank supports student writing by helping the teachers grade the senior research papers.



*Ben Wilson, Beveridge & Diamond's Managing Principal, in Birney Elementary School's new and newly stocked library.*

## Fannie Mae, Law Firms Provide Books For Schools

For the past three years, **Fannie Mae's Legal Department** has teamed up with the D.C. bookstore Politics and Prose to conduct a book drive for the Marie Reed Learning Center.

Twenty percent of all purchases made at the store over a three-day period that includes a weekend are donated to a Marie Reed book fund.

The book drive, which occurs in the fall during the holiday shopping season, is widely publicized throughout Fannie Mae. Employees are encouraged to buy their gifts at Politics & Prose and to buy books on the school's wish list during the drive. Fannie Mae employees are also encouraged to bring in gently used books to support Marie Reed's efforts to provide books to the families of children who attend the school.

Last fall, **Steptoe & Johnson** also partnered with Politics & Prose in its book drive for Scott Montgomery Elementary School. Steptoe's book drive raised \$3,000.

**Holland & Knight** selects a book to read to the pre-K students every month. Enough copies of that book are purchased to make it possible for every child to take the book home.



*Mock Trial champions from Bell Multicultural High School with their coaches from Sutherland and competition organizers. Back row: 4th from left, Kelly Miller, Sutherland; far right, Megan Miller, Georgetown Law Center. Middle row: 2nd from left, Eugene Hamilton, former Chief Judge of the D.C. Superior Court, Bottom row: far left, Chris Hammond, Sutherland; center, Kim Stover, Georgetown Law Center.*

## Top Street Law Honors Again Won by Partner Schools (cont'd)

Other high schools recognized for their outstanding legal presentations this year were Banneker, coached by **Arent Fox**; Cardozo, coached by **Covington & Burling**; and Dunbar, coached by **Williams & Connolly**.

The coordinator of the Williams & Connolly coaching team, Amer Ahmed, has also developed a series of interactive constitutional law lessons for Dunbar students. These lessons explore freedom of speech, freedom of association, and other fundamental rights.

## New Partnerships (cont'd)

**Drinker, Biddle & Reath** launched its partnership at Anne Beers Elementary School with a tutoring program that involves 25 volunteers from the firm. Drinker Biddle is working with the Principal, Gwendolyn Payton, to get permission to continue tutoring students over the summer. The firm is also looking forward to working on fix-up projects at the school.

*(Continued in next column)*

**Epstein, Becker & Green** (EBG) is very busy at Emery Educational Center. The firm arranged for students at the school to take part in the Breakfast with a Legend sponsored by Street Law, Inc. Through that program, Emery students enjoyed three breakfasts with federal judges from the D.C. Circuit. Prior to the breakfasts, the students were prepared during three classroom sessions conducted by volunteer attorneys from the firm. Through a variety of fundraising efforts, EBG raised enough money to make it possible for every student who does well on standardized tests to open a \$25 savings account.

## Bracewell & Giuliani Landscaping (cont'd)

Last year, Bracewell & Giuliani turned no-longer used equipment and office furniture into classroom and playground equipment for Brightwood.

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 Bracewell presented to each class at Brightwood.



*Matt Haynie and Tracy Davis from Bracewell & Giuliani install new plants at Brightwood Elementary School.*

## 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

**Brown Rudnick**

Whittier Education Center

**Covington & Burling**

Cardozo Senior High School

**Dechert LLP**

Ross Elementary School

**Dickstein Shapiro**

Ellington School of the Arts

**Dow Lohnes**

Kelly Miller Middle School

**Drinker, Biddle & Reath**

Ann Beers Elementary School

**Epstein, Becker & Green**

Emery Educational Center

**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

**Health Right, Inc.**

H.D. Cooke Elementary School  
 Ferebee-Hope Elementary School  
 LaSalle Elementary School  
 Lincoln Junior High School

**Holland & Knight**

Banneker Senior High School  
 Cleveland Elementary School

**Howrey**

Bancroft Elementary School

**McDermott, Will & Emery**

Amidon-Bowen 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**

Bruce Monroe at Park View  
 Elementary School

**Sidley Austin**

Thomson Elementary School

**Steptoe & Johnson**

Montgomery Elementary School

**Sutherland**

Bell Multicultural Senior  
 High School

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

J.O. Wilson Elementary 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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**BULLETIN BOARD**

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**New Partnership Opportunities**  
**Available Starting Fall 2009**

If you are interested in receiving more  
information about starting an educational  
partnership with a D.C. public school, or in  
serving as a volunteer coordinator for the Part-  
nerships Program, please contact Rod Boggs at:  
(202) 319-1000, ext. 103, or  
Rod\_Boggs@washlaw.org.

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