

Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board

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

Spring 2007

Partner Schools Take Top Prizes In 2nd GeoPlunge Tournament

Holland & Knight and Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw were especially proud of their partnership schools on November 30, 2006. On that day, Cleveland Elementary School, paired with Holland & Knight, surpassed 20 other schools participating in the second city-wide GeoPlunge geography tournament held at the Charles Sumner School.

Gage Eckington, cheered on by its law firm sponsor, Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw, took second place in the tournament. Cleveland Elementary, one of 12 schools that fielded more than one team, also placed third.

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

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Banneker Robotics Team member Gilbert Castillo with the team's robot and a trophy from the regional robotics competition.

Banneker Robotics Team Supported by Holland & Knight Wins Regional Awards

Last winter, 18 seniors at Banneker High School, who call themselves the Hounds of Steel, built a robot and entered it in a regional competition that brought recognition to its creators and to their school. The competition was sponsored by NASA, which also provided the students with a grant for materials and for shipping and travel to Richmond where the competition was held. **Holland & Knight** provided financial support for Banneker's robotics project.

The Richmond event was a FIRST competition. FIRST is an acronym for Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology. The FIRST Robotics Competition is a unique varsity sport of the mind designed to help high-school

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IRIS' N T R O



IRIS J. TOYER

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

*"It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make
a difference."* —Tom Brokaw

Tom Brokaw has summed up what I believe to be true about the D.C. Public School Partnerships Project volunteers. For over ten years, lawyers, paralegals, legal secretaries, other law firm personnel and area companies have been making a difference in individual D.C. public schools.

The 2006-07 school year has been an exceptional one with the proposed change in governance of the D.C. Public Schools looming on the horizon. Questions abound on what it will mean for students and school staff as they return to school in the fall. I expect that our volunteers will be there to provide invaluable support to their school partners to help smooth the transition.

While the governance debate has been a distraction, our participating firms and volunteers have continued to provide their partnership schools and students with remarkable opportunities to experience and learn new things. For example, with the assistance of **Holland & Knight**, the Banneker High School Science Club participated in a regional robotics competition and used their experience and the knowledge gained to develop a winning cell-phone locker invention. Please read their story on page 1.

One might also point to another front-page story, the second GeoPlunge Tournament, which was held last fall and which provided over 100 elementary school students with the opportunity to compete in an exciting and educational geography competition. Organized by **Arent Fox** and the Washington Lawyers' Committee, the tournament found 25 area firms to sponsor 32 teams from 21 schools. Teachers and students have expressed great interest in the game, and they are looking forward to the next school year's tournament.

We must remind ourselves that there is still a lot of work to do. As changes to the school system are inevitable, I encourage every firm to remain focused on making a difference. As you read this issue of *Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board* think about the words of Alan Vollman, our guest columnist, himself a former teacher, as he describes his experience working with Banneker's students and staff. Then imagine yourself in his shoes. You can do it too!

Iris

Iris J. Toyer, Director

D.C. Public School Partnerships Project

A PARTNER'S

T O R Y

Holland & Knight and Banneker



*Alan Vollmann, Partner
Holland & Knight*

Academic High School have been partners for eight years. Banneker, a D.C. public school founded in 1981, provides students with a rigorous academic curriculum to help them succeed in college.

As a magnet school with an ambitious charter, Banneker has always attracted creative and dedicated teachers in the profession. But as a D.C. public school, the teachers work in substandard facilities and cope with constantly changing directives from federal and local bureaucracies. With the encouragement of our firm's charitable foundation, I sought out opportunities for our firm to work with teachers at the school.

I have a particular interest in the D.C. public schools, since I had worked as an English teacher in the early 1970's in a California public school before I entered law school. But the Proposition 13 taxpayer revolt paralyzed the public schools by freezing budgets, making a difficult job even harder. Educational reformers were convinced that curricula could be "teacher-proof" if the lesson plans were micro-managed and teachers held to account for results.

I quickly learned that the intervening decades had little to show for reform, but at Banneker I met teachers who fought the system. I began tutoring students

each morning at the school and eventually taught some classes of my own, seeking out teachers with ideas on how to motivate students. Let me tell you about some of these teachers who gave Holland & Knight the opportunity to help them build successful programs at the school.

Robert Johnson, a veteran Latin teacher, and his successor, Michika Phillip, taught the Latin One class required for all incoming freshmen. They both organized the class as a rigorous introduction to the humanities with a traditional emphasis on grammar and word derivations.

Since freshmen have few opportunities for academic awards, they asked if our firm would pay the fees for the National Latin Exam, provide secretarial services for supplementary review materials, and sponsor the annual awards ceremony. Each year at a school-wide assembly, as many as 80% of the students win medals for their achievement and have their names engraved for posterity on a plaque in a prominent location at the school. Past assemblies have included hilarious student productions – in Latin, of course. For example, the students have produced American Idol contests in ancient Rome. Thanks to these outstanding Latin teachers, Latin is not a dead language at Banneker. In addition, English and foreign language teachers applaud the grammatical fluency of the upper-class students.

Librarian Sharon Sorrells and counselor Edna Mills helped to start an engineering club. With their encourage-

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NEWSWORTHY

EFFORTS



Students from Webb Elementary School recite Frederick Douglass' speeches from the steps of his home.

"Live It Learn It" Makes the World Larger And More Interesting For D.C. Students

Live It Learn It is the well-chosen name for an organization that conducts educational field trips to Washington sites for classes of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders. The organization can be a valuable resource for firms eager to expand the horizons of students at the elementary schools where firms have established partnerships.

Founder Matthew Wheelock piloted Live It Learn It's approach to teaching public school students while teaching at Walker Jones Elementary School, where he supplemented classroom instruction with carefully planned, educationally focused trips to local museums, memorials, and parks. He noticed the positive effect that these experiences had on his students' motivation and academic performance.

Before each field trip, students benefit from a lesson about the site they will be visiting. A lesson following the trip gives

students the opportunity to use what they have learned on the trip. The lessons, as well as experiences during the trip, are tied to specific academic standards. Through Live It Learn it, students have the opportunity to visit and learn from 16 different Washington sites.

At an April 2007 luncheon for firm coordinators of the school partnerships, Matthew Wheelock provided an overview of the Live It Learn It program. Rod Boggs, Executive Director of the Washington Lawyers' Committee, strongly recommended to the coordinators that school partnerships could benefit from working with Live It Learn It. He suggested that firms could co-sponsor field trips by providing funds and relying on the expertise of Live It Learn It to organize the trips. For further information about Live It Learn It, contact Matthew Wheelock at 202-546-6223 or visit www.liveitlearnit.org.

Pepper Hamilton Honors Partnership Coordinator For Community Service

Trudy Williams, who coordinates **Pepper Hamilton's** partnership with Stanton Elementary School, was honored with the firm's 2006 William R. Klaus Community Service Award in recognition of her dedication to and support for the school. The \$1,000 award she received was donated to the Stanton School.

"Trudy single-handedly sustains office support for Stanton Elementary School," said David Wormser, partner-in-charge of the Washington office, as he presented the Community Service Award to Trudy at a luncheon reception last November. "She provides help with fundraising drives, awards, tutoring, winter coat drives and much more. She is a consistent inspiration to all of us."

"This is a wonderful honor," Trudy said. "Mr. Klaus was an incredible man, and I am grateful that I have been able to measure up in some small way. It makes me excited about doing what I do and helping those around me."

The Community Service Award is named for William R. Klaus, chairman of Pepper Hamilton former. He was one of the founders and early presidents of Philadelphia's Community Legal Services and a former chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association.



Gibbs Elementary student displays her artwork inspired by African Art Museum visit.



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Trudy Williams receives Pepper Hamilton's community service award from David Wormser, partner-in-charge of the firm's Washington office.

Peer Mediation Materials And Guidance Available From Sidley Austin

Sidley Austin has developed a set of peer mediation materials that can be used by other firms interested in bringing peer mediation to their partner schools. The materials are based on Sidley & Austin's 11 years of experience with the peer mediation program it established and supports at its partner school, Thomson Elementary.

Every week, volunteers from Sidley teach mediation to a group of fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students at the school. Student mediators are selected by their teachers in consultation with the school principal and guidance counselor. Volunteers from the firm, with the help of conflict resolution experts, train the young mediators in conflict resolution, active listening, and other communication skills. This training makes it possible for the student mediators to help resolve real conflicts between their classmates.

For further information about this program or to obtain a set of peer mediation materials, contact Ron Flagg at 202-736-8171.

ESPRIT ELEMENTARY



Winning Partnership: Holland & Knight volunteers with the Cleveland Elementary teacher and students who won the Fall 2006 GeoPlunge Tournament. Teacher Barbara McLaughlin (far left), with April McPherson (3rd from left, back row), Tanya Uptegrove, and Robert Browne (back row, far right) from Holland & Knight.

Partner Schools Score GeoPlunge Wins (cont'd)

“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 proved to be such a success with students at the Arent Fox partnership school, Randle Highlands Elementary, that Alan and his law firm colleagues persuaded the Washington Lawyers’ Committee to co-sponsor the first GeoPlunge tournament in Spring 2006 at the Sumner School. At the end of that successful event, students eagerly asked, “When is the next one?”

The Committee’s Director of the D.C. Public School Partnerships Project, Iris Toyer, along with Alan Fishel and other volunteers from Arent Fox organized the

day-long November 2006 tournament, in which over 100 fifth- and sixth-graders comprising 32 teams from 21 D.C. public schools competed. Morning rounds of GeoPlunge determined the seedings for the afternoon.

During lunch, provided for all students, chaperones, and tournament organizers, Kerry Knott, Vice President of Government Relations for Comcast, and Tommy Sheppard, Vice President for Basketball Operations for the Washington Wizards, gave brief talks on working in the cable and sports industries. Mr. Knott and Mr. Sheppard stayed on to play GeoPlunge with many of the children, which the students loved.

The afternoon was devoted to playoff rounds of GeoPlunge. In the final round, Cleveland narrowly won over Gage Eckington. During the consolation rounds, Thomson Elementary, sponsored by Sidley Austin, won the Comeback Award.

(Continued on page 7)

Akin Gump's Efforts Bring Web Connection To Tyler Elementary

About three years ago, **Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld** realized that computers at its partner school, Tyler Elementary, were not fulfilling their educational potential. Students were able to use computers, many of which had been donated by the law firm, to develop important skills. However, Tyler's computers could not be connected to the Internet, making it impossible for students to become 21st century researchers.

While Verizon had provided cable access to the school building, there was no connection between the Verizon lines and the school's critical control cabinet.

Akin Gump partner Stan Samorajczyk made it a priority of the law firm to get Tyler connected to the Internet. After many months of consultation with those responsible for technology in the D.C. Public School system, Akin Gump information technology personnel conducted several wireless surveys, purchased and installed seven wireless access points, purchased and installed several USB network cards in computers, and reconfigured some DCPS laptops and work stations. This effort connected Tyler Elementary School to the worldwide web.



Fifth-grade student at Tyler Elementary School using the worldwide web.



Howrey tutors with Bancroft students and teachers at the Capitol: Adults from left to right are Patricia Morris, Howrey tutor; Josue Rentas, Bancroft teacher; Nicole Ortega, Bancroft teacher; and Jeff Connor, Howrey tutor.

Howrey Takes Students On Field Trip To Capitol

Howrey and its team of 35 tutors took the fifth-graders at Bancroft Elementary School on a May field trip that included a tour of the Capitol and a visit with Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. The inspiration for this trip came from a bulletin in the Congresswoman's newsletter announcing that her office will arrange trips for D.C. public school students.

GeoPlunge (cont'd)

The tournament was sponsored by the Washington Lawyers' Committee and the following law firms and corporations: **Akin, Gump, Strauss Hauer & Feld; Arent Fox; Baach Robinson; Baker & McKenzie; Bracewell & Giuliani; Cameron & Hornbostel; Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton; Dickstein Shapiro; DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary; Dewey Ballantine; Fannie Mae Corporate Legal Department; Foley & Lardner; Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson; Goodwin Procter; Health Right, Inc.; Heller Ehrman; Holland & Knight; Kirkland & Ellis; Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw; Morgan Lewis; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison; Reed Smith; Sidley Austin; Spriggs & Hollingsworth; Steptoe & Johnson; Wiley Rein; and Winston & Strawn.**

WIDER WORLDS



Bell Multicultural School student, Stephanie Baez (left), with attorney/mentor Cheri Bennett.

Sutherland Junior College Helps Bell Students See Greater Possibilities For Their Future

During the 2006/07 school year, **Sutherland, Asbill & Brennan** launched a program called Sutherland Junior College to help students from Bell Multicultural High School learn about, prepare for, apply to, get accepted by, and attend a four-year college.

The program is designed to prepare and encourage students who might not otherwise have the motivation, support, or ability to go to college.

The centerpiece of the program is a weekly after-school session during the students' junior year.

There are also college trips as well as periodic seminars and assistance during the students' senior year.

Students who participate in Sutherland Junior College are nominated by their teachers. The teachers identify students who are smart enough to attend college,

but may believe college is beyond their academic or financial grasp, may be concerned over cultural or familial implications of going away to college, or may not know enough about the opportunities that high education offers to be properly motivated to prepare for college.

This past school year, 10 Bell juniors participated in Sutherland Junior College—usually called SJC by both students and mentors from Sutherland.

The students who participated this year will continue in their senior year. Because of enthusiasm for the program at both the school and law firm, 10 new juniors will be enrolled in SJC this fall.

Martha Medina, one of the participating students, sums up her experience this way: "SJC makes college seem a lot more important than I thought it to be, and SJC is opening up my eyes to possible colleges for me."

Fulbright & Jaworski Attorneys And Macfarland Students Enjoy Poetry Slam

The Fulbright & Jaworski/Macfarland Middle School partnership staged a poetry slam in January 2006. Sixteen Macfarland students and their attorney-mentors spent an afternoon at the firm listening to one another read poems and other creative writing. Their audience also included the firm's legal assistants and support staff.

Fulbright associate attorney and partnership coordinator Gozie Onyema wrote a poem about how, as the child of Nigerian immigrants, "home" has always meant Africa, and more specifically Nigeria, in his household.

Another Fulbright associate attorney and the poetry slam organizer Ashley Seuell read Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

Macfarland seventh graders Daniel Singletary read from his essay about his dreams for the United States, Bradley Jackson wrote an essay on "what if horses were our only transportation," and Blair Crutchfield described what life would be like if we had no clocks.



Robotics team member, Maurice Chevalier (left) and Mark Hannum, math teacher at Banneker, try to toss team member Gilbert Castillo into the shipping crate for the robot.



Theoma Umez-Eronini, a member of Banneker's Robotics Team, labels the crate in which their robot will be shipped to Richmond for the March regional competition.

Banneker Robotics (cont'd)

students discover how interesting and rewarding the life of engineers and researchers can be. It challenges teams of young people and their mentors to solve a common problem in a six-week timeframe using a standard "kit of parts" and a common set of rules. Teams build robots, and then enter them in a series of competitions.

The Hounds of Steel and their robot did very well in the regional competition.

In their presentations to the judges, both formal and informal, the students described how they applied what they had learned through robotics to the development of their cell-phone locker invention.

Their presentations earned them the Entrepreneurship Award.

The robot performed so well that the Hounds of Steel ranked fourth out of 66 teams.

This fall, all 18 members of Hounds of Steel will be heading to a variety of colleges and universities where they will study science and mathematics.

Holland & Knight Partners With Banneker High's Creative Teachers (continued from page 3)

ment, two math teachers, John Mahoney and Mark Hannum, worked after school and on weekends with their "InvenTeam" to create robots to enter into national competitions.

Funds for the InvenTeam effort came from the collection of printer cartridges sold to a company that recycles them. Holland & Knight was a major contributor since dozens of cartridges are used weekly at the firm. One of the inventions, a cell-phone locker designed to store students' phones in schools where they are prohibited, was so well received in a Lemelson-MIT competition that Holland & Knight intellectual property partner John Moran prepared a patent application for the invention with the help of the student inventors.

To raise funds for additional student-centered projects, history teacher Richard Singer and Principal Anita Berger organized the Friends of Banneker Foundation, with the help of Holland & Knight tax attorney Richard Sills. The Foundation gives the school a tax-exempt entity to apply for grants and to solicit donations from alumni and



community groups interested in supporting the school. If the phone-locker invention is successful, the patent will be owned by the Foundation, and any profits will go to fund future inventions by the InvenTeam.

Whitney Warren, Jacque Leighty, and Leo Bowman of the English Department enrolled Banneker in the National Endowment of the Arts' Poetry OutLoud contest. Holland & Knight sponsored the event, provided lawyers and staff to serve as judges, and purchased poetry anthologies and other awards for the many contestants. In the three years since the NEA started this program, a Banneker student has already won the national competition, and in 2006, the competition was even featured on the Lehrer NewsHour in a special segment about

(Continued on page 12)

Pictured above is Alan Vollman with Latin teacher Michika Phillip. To the right are Latin teacher Michika Phillip and the Banneker High School National Latin Exam medal winners, sponsored by Holland & Knight.



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

Bingham McCutchen

Adams Elementary School

Bracewell & Giuliani

Brightwood Elementary School

Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft

H.D. Woodson Senior High School

Covington & Burling

Cardozo Senior High School

D.C. Chartered Health Plan, Inc.

Ballou Senior High School

Dickstein Shapiro

Ellington School of the Arts

DLA Piper US

Bruce Monroe Elementary School

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

McKenna Long & Aldridge

Stevens 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

Stephoe & Johnson

Montgomery Elementary School

Sutherland Asbill & Brennan

Bell Multicultural Senior High School

U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia

Amidon Elementary School

U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit

J.O. Wilson Elementary School

Verizon

Adams Elementary School

Washington Bar Association - Young Lawyers' Division

Banneker Senior High School

Ballou Senior High School

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

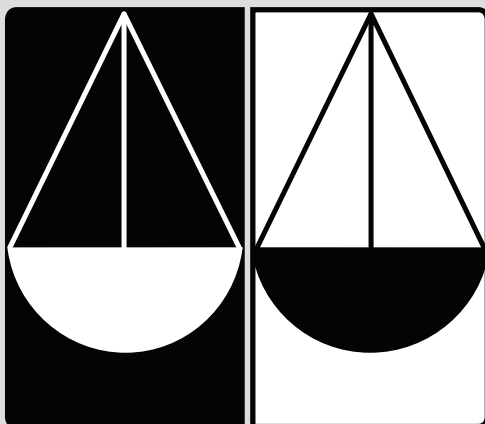
Noyes Elementary School

Williams & Connolly

Dunbar Senior High School

Winston & Strawn

Kamit Institute for Magnificent Achievers



D.C. Public School Partnerships Project's

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Holland & Knight Partners With Banneker High's Creative Teachers (cont'd)

poetry in the public schools. As a former English teacher, I was amazed that students would stop me in the halls to tell me about the poems they were memorizing to perform in front of the entire student body.

Another appreciated service that Holland & Knight has provided to Banneker is free coffee served each morning for the teachers and staff.

Since many of the teachers arrive well before the school day begins, the coffee provides a welcome start for these very busy professionals.

Holland & Knight is proud to support Banneker's creative and dedicated teachers. If your firm is looking to sponsor a D.C. public school, look for creative and dedicated teachers and become a part of a project that the students will remember long after they have graduated.

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