

Partners Unlimited Bulletin Board

A Public Education Legal Services Project of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Fall 2005

Education Amendment Proposed for D.C. Charter

The Washington Lawyers' Committee's Public Education Reform Project and Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools are leading an effort to include an amendment to the District of Columbia Charter that would provide children with the right to a high-quality education. The proposed amendment is expected to provide a valuable tool in pressing for urgently needed educational reform in the District of Columbia. It reads:

The fundamental right to educational opportunities is a basic value of our society and serves as a foundation of our democratic system of government. Accordingly, the District of Columbia is hereby obligated to provide a system of high-quality public schools to every child.

The effort to enact this amendment grew out of recommendations in a report, entitled *Separate and Unequal, the State of D.C. Public Schools*

(Continued on page 10)



Guy Collier, Ginger Collier and Chris Lahiff serve pizza to Bowen second graders during an end-of-year outing at Glen Echo Park.

MWE Tutors, Bowen Students Celebrate Success at Glen Echo

A pizza picnic, a puppet show, and carousel rides—that's how tutors from **McDermott, Will & Emery** (MWE) and 20 second-grade students from Bowen Elementary School celebrated the end of the 2004/05 school year at Glen Echo Park.

Every year, attorneys from MWE reward the second-graders they tutor in math and reading with celebrations. In December, the firm sponsors a holiday party at the school, and in the spring, there is an outing. This spring, the outing at Glen Echo gave these students from southwest Washington their first opportunity to visit the park and to see a puppet show.

"The kids seemed to have a lot of fun, especially on the carousel," reported Ginger Collier, who organized the outing. "Everyone from MWE had a ball. They are great kids."

CHECK THE BOARD

Iris' Intro	2
Volunteer's Story	3
Newsworthy New Efforts	4-5
Employment Experience	6-7
Reading and Writing	8-9
School Partnership List	11

IRIS'

INTRO



IRIS J. TOYER

Project Director, Public Education Legal Services Project, Washington Lawyers' Committee

Just when I think that our firm-school partnerships have exhausted the list of possible activities, we hear about new and creative ways in which firms have engaged their school partners.

For example, Patton Boggs attorney Jeff Turner discusses his participation on the interview panel that selected the new school principal at his firm's partner school, Francis Junior High. In the spirit of disclosure, I too served on the panel as a parent representative. It is perhaps the most important decision that a school community makes. The Francis Junior High School community was pleased to have the participation of Patton Boggs. Jeff writes about his experience in our guest column on page 3.

At our most recent School Partnership Luncheon, Arent Fox attorney Alan Fishel introduced us all to Geoplunge, a geography

game he invented for students. His firm has used it as a learning tool for the students at Randle Highlands Elementary School, and the kids love it!

We have several stories on ways in which firms have provided not only learning opportunities for our high school students, but also employment opportunities for them at the law firms. As you will read, Covington & Burling, Holland & Knight and Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky are hiring students from the schools where they have partnerships. The firms' belief in the abilities of these young people is demonstrated by the responsibility and trust placed on their young shoulders. From the comments of these young workers, you will sense the pride that these students take in their positions.

We also present two great stories that describe how partnerships can use writing and literature to broaden the experiences of students in our schools. At the elementary level, Reid Smith's annual fifth-grade essay contest asked the students at Park View Elementary School to look ahead and write about their future lives. At the high-school level, Holland and Knight assisted the students and coordinator at their partner school, Banneker High School, as they participated in the regional competition of the National Poetry Recitation Contest of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Clearly, firms have not even come close to exhausting the list of possible ideas for partnership activities. I encourage you to join us!

Iris

Iris J. Toyer, Director
Public Education Legal Services Project

VOLUNTEER'S

T O R Y



Jeff Turner, Partner, Patton Boggs

Approximately a decade ago, **Patton Boggs** became partners with Francis Jr. High School, which is located just two blocks from our West End offices but draws a diverse student body from throughout the Washington area.

At all levels of the firm, from staff to senior partners, we have worked with Francis Jr. High School students and faculty in a variety of ways, from participating in the chess club, to tutoring, to financing a trip to Paris for aspiring French speakers, to providing music lessons, to helping prepare Science Fair Projects, to coaching sports teams. Through a firm-wide book sale and silent auction, we have regularly raised thousands of dollars that we used to help the students, such as paying for standardized test preparation, buying new basketball uniforms, and underwriting a graduation party. Last year alone, food and wine connoisseurs in the firm raised over \$1,000 with the sale of a single gourmet dinner and three vintage Bordeaux wines.

Throughout our affiliation with the school, we had a great working relationship with its principal, Dr. Courtney Fletcher.

Earlier this year, he announced his retirement and asked us to participate in the selection of a new principal.

Given our commitment to the school, we were delighted to be the partner representative of the selection committee, which included representatives of parents and teachers as well. Much to our delight, the single most outstanding candidate we interviewed in fact was offered and accepted the job. During the interview, she mentioned the desirability of teaching parents how to use computers so that they would be better able to help their children with schoolwork and could stay abreast of school activities.

By the time the interview was over, I had already contacted our Chief Operating Officer and the head of our Information Services Department by Blackberry to get them thinking about how we could implement her idea. Within a few days, one of our clients had offered to help as well.

Now that she is on the job, we look forward to working with Mrs. Stephanie Crutchfield to improve the lives of the students at Francis Jr. High School, and the lives of their parents as well.



Jeff Turner and a Francis student at the 2005/06 kickoff of the Francis Chess Club, supported by Patton Boggs

NEWS WORTHY

E
W

E
F
F
O
R
T
S



Alan Fishel, Partner at Arent Fox and inventor of Geoplunge, demonstrates the geography game to Rosemarie Clune from Patton Boggs at the School Partnership Luncheon.

New Geography Game a Big Hit with Learners of All Ages

One of the highlights of the School Partnership Luncheon on September 17th was a spirited game of Geoplunge. School partnership coordinators, principals, and Washington Lawyers' Committee staff soon became enthralled with the new geography game invented by **Arent Fox** attorney Alan Fishel.

While coaching youth soccer in 2002, Alan Fishel overheard some youngsters trying to figure out the location of Miami, Florida. The realization that these youngsters in his community of Fairfax, Virginia, had no sense of geography sent him on a quest for an entertaining way to teach them. But the games he found in stores were so disappointing that he decided to create what he needed.

After a year of devoting weekends to his geography project, Alan came up with Geoplunge, a set of 98 cards with instruc-

(Continued on page 10)



Randle Highlands student enjoys a game of Geoplunge brought to the school by Alan Fishel and other volunteers from Arent Fox.



Darryl Gorman, Deputy Attorney General for Agencies, assembles a desk for the new library at Terrell Junior High School.

Renovation, New Projects Brought to Terrell Junior High By Office of Attorney General

The partnership between the **Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia** (OAG) and Terrell Junior High School is generating a great deal of excitement and activity. This summer, OAG joined forces with a local consulting firm to beautify and refurbish the library at Terrell, which included discarding tons of outdated books and furnishings, cleaning the remaining books and book shelves, replacing the coverings for the windows, painting the walls and trim, and obtaining new furniture. This effort, which continued throughout the summer, concluded on August 27th – two days before school started.

“Although we had to work in sweltering conditions, the transformation of the library has been well worth the effort,” stated Joel Armstrong, an attorney in the OAG and one of the members of the steering committee for the project. Cheryl Ziegler, another member of the steering committee added: “The number of OAG employees who turned out to work on the library exceeded all of our expectations, and we spent well over 300 hours working on the library this summer.”

When school begins, OAG will start two new initiatives with the principal aim of improving student test scores. The first of these initiatives is the “Saturday Academy,” which will be limited to 25 students

and will meet every Saturday during the school year. Using math and reading software and with the assistance of OAG tutors, Saturday Academy students will work at their own pace to improve these essential skills in an enjoyable and challenging environment. In addition, as part of the Saturday Academy, the students will be exposed to esteem-building and cultural activities each week. This format was selected because, among other things, it does not require OAG staff to be experts in the subject matter being taught, or to create lesson plans in order to participate. The software will allow OAG volunteers to track more accurately the progress of participating students over the course of the year.

The second initiative by OAG is a book club, whose participants will meet once a month in the new and improved library to discuss books of interest to the students. Unlike the Saturday Academy, the book club will be open to all students. It is hoped that the book club will encourage students to read and will improve their reading comprehension skills.

Steering committee member Angela Harvey said there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the Terrell partnership. “These new initiatives, which were developed in consultation with Terrell’s principal, are very exciting,” said Ms. Harvey. “We believe that these partnership activities will have a very positive impact on the students at Terrell.”



Library at Terrell Junior High School that volunteers from the Office of the Attorney General renovated over the summer.

EMPLOYMENT

X P E R I E N C E



Nora Sullivan, one of the coordinators of Covington & Burling's Saturday Academy and Nia Jacobs, summer employee from Cardozo High School.

Cardozo Students Work at Covington & Burling

This past summer, Nia Jacobs, Wonelle Jones, and Helene Traore upheld the tradition of Cardozo students working at **Covington & Burling**. Their involvement with the firm began during the school year with a weekly Saturday Academy that meets at the firm. The purpose of the Saturday program is to provide enrichment activities and to prepare students for the world of work. During the Saturday sessions, students practice being interviewed, and they learn how to write resumes and fill out job applications, including one for employment at Covington.

Nia Jacobs, now a senior at Cardozo, worked for the summer in the firm's Human Resources Department, where much of her time was spent reorganizing files. According to one of her

supervisors, Matt Lowden, she was an effective and tireless worker with a great attitude. Nia described her experience this way: "My job duties included document shredding, copying and collating thick binders and documents. I also got to see some of the prospective employees come in for interviews. It was very exciting to work at a law firm because the people were so nice. I had always thought that a law firm was a very serious place, that there was no time for laughter. But, I was wrong. What I learned was that people at law firms work very, very hard and somehow manage to keep smiling in spite of their heavy workload."

Wonelle Jones and Helene Traore worked as mail clerks. They spent their days delivering papers to and collecting them

(Continued on page 10)

Pilot Intern Program Proves Successful At Holland & Knight

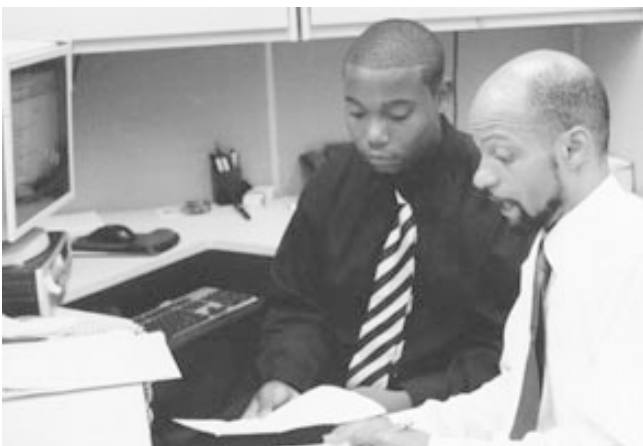
Holland & Knight's initial experience with employing a high school student for the summer proved successful for both the firm and for Dominique West, the Banneker High School student who worked at Holland & Knight over the summer.

"I worked in records," recalled Dominique. "I indexed boxes, and I delivered and picked them up from offices throughout the firm. I also helped with UPS and FedEx shipments. My favorite part of the job was trying to locate the boxes that had the files that people in the firm needed to retrieve. These were computer searches where I used clues like key words. Solving these puzzles was fun."

"It was great to have another capable pair of hands," reports Anthony Stevens, Records Supervisor at Holland & Knight. "He caught on quickly and didn't have to wait to be told what to do. He often took the initiative with record searches, and he was good at doing them."

During his summer at Holland & Knight, Dominique had the opportunity to experience other aspects of the firm. For example, he accompanied Attorney Leo G. Rydzewski to a superior court hearing. He also attended the annual Holocaust Remembrance Dinner sponsored by the Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation.

(Continued on page 12)



Banneker student Dominique West confers with his supervisor Anthony Stevens, Supervisor of Records at Holland & Knight.



Molly McCardle, recent Ellington graduate, shelves books in the library at Dickstein, Shapiro, Morin & Oshinsky.

Ellington Student Works in Library At Dickstein, Shapiro

Molly McCardle who just graduated from the Ellington School for the Arts spent last summer working in the library at **Dickstein, Shapiro, Morin & Oshinsky**, which has a partnership with Ellington.

"I felt confident that I could handle the job of library assistant," recalls Molly. "I had worked in a bookstore, and I was used to an environment where you had to take care of books. I was also familiar with the Dewey Decimal System. My responsibilities included processing books to be shelved, shelving books, packaging books for binding, and sorting mail. I love books, and I enjoy libraries, so I was very happy to be working there. I also thought it was very sweet when some of the attorneys who work with the Roundtable Project took me to lunch on my first day and treated me to ice cream on my last day."

The Roundtable is a bimonthly lunch and discussion of current events that Dickstein sponsors for students at Ellington.

READING

A
N
D



Stephanie Oparaugo, a senior at Banneker High School, accepts the title of Washington Regional Champion in the first National Endowment for the Arts National Poetry Recitation Contest from Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

W
R
I
T
I
N
G

Holland & Knight Supports Poetry Reading

Last April, Stephanie Oparaugo, a senior at Banneker High School won the title of Washington Regional Champion in the first National Endowment for the Arts National Poetry Recitation Contest. The support that Stephanie’s high school received from **Holland & Knight** helped make possible her impressive win among a field of talented students from high schools across the District, Northern Virginia, and Maryland.

After each English class at Banneker selected its poetry recitation winner, the school turned to Holland & Knight to help select the winner from the school. The law firm provided judges as well as the design and printing of the program for the semifinal competition at Banneker. The firm also gave each Banneker semifinalist a handsome poetry anthology. After winning the

semifinals at Banneker, Stephanie Oparaugo went on to win the regional competition.

Stephanie’s recitation reflected her own life experience, her love of language, and strong interpretative skills. She selected “The Second Coming” by William Butler Yeats because of her personal connection with the poem. The poem’s central line, “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” provided the title for the groundbreaking novel “Things Fall Apart”, by Chinua Achebe, which describes the colonization of a region in Nigeria from the perspective of an Ibo warrior. “Because I am Nigerian, I had to do it,” Stephanie explained.

To honor Stephanie and Banneker’s achievement, Holland & Knight held a special luncheon at the firm. This occasion gave attorneys from Holland & Knight the

(Continued on next page)

chance to celebrate with Stephanie, her friends and family, and teachers from Banneker. Stephanie will use her \$1,000 cash award to help pay for her education at William and Mary College in Virginia where she is now a freshman. Banneker received a \$2,000 stipend for poetry books.

According to both Al Vollmann, who coordinated Holland & Knight's involvement in the competition, and Wendy Warren, who organized the contest at the school, the most rewarding result of the Poetry Recitation Contest was the great enthusiasm for poetry that the competition created throughout the student body. This enthusiasm will help build the foundation for future poetry programs at the school.

Stephanie Oparaugo was one of ten students from middle and high schools in the Washington area who showcased their skills during the April Regional Finals at the Folger Shakespeare Library. An all-star panel of judges presided over the contest, including the Honorable James P. Moran, Virginia 8th Congressional District; E. Ethelbert Miller, poet and director of the African American Resource Center at Howard University; and Folger Shakespeare Library Director Gail Kern Paster. Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), presented prizes to Stephanie,

(Continued on page 10)



Stephanie Oparaugo with Al Vollmann, Holland & Knight partner, and her mother at a firm luncheon held in Stephanie's honor.

Park View Students Challenged by Reed Smith To Describe Their Future

The annual essay contest for fifth graders at Park View Elementary School has long been a key element of the school's partnership with **Reed Smith**. A few years ago, a fifth-grade field trip to the chambers of U.S. District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan also became a key element of the partnership. This happened when Judge Sullivan, a Park View alumnus, contacted Reed Smith to explore how he could participate in an activity for the school.

Last spring, because the essay contest took place shortly after the field trip to Judge Sullivan's chambers, the field trip became a point of departure for the essay contest, as the announcement of the contest explained: *"You learned in our recent visit with Judge Sullivan that he lived in your neighborhood, attended Park View, and then went on to accomplish many things. Where do you see yourself 20 years from now? Think about this and try to imagine—The year is 2025, and the fifth-grade class from Park View is coming to see you. Where will you be? What will you be doing? What words of inspiration will you have for the students? The essay topic is **Life After Park View**."*

First place winner Nhu Duong wrote: *"I see myself teaching 2nd graders because I know that kids that are 7 or 8 years old will understand what I am saying. I will be teaching kids about what helped me through my life, the teachers and the people that inspired me to teach. . . I want to teach children because they are the hope of the future."*

At the school's graduation, Nhu Duong was honored with a prize of \$200. Second- and third-place winners received prizes of \$150 and \$100.

The essay of second-place winner Cadijah Walcott anticipated a very busy and successful life. She wrote: *"Twenty years from now, the fifth-grade class from Park View is coming to see me. They can visit me at my doctor's office or at my music center. If possible, they may also be able to visit me at one of my local fashion shows."*

Proposed Education Amendment (cont'd)

Fifty Years after Brown and Bolling, released last March by the Committee and Parents United. The report was prepared with the help of teams of lawyers—led by Ronald Flagg and Patrick Linehan at **Sidley Austin Brown & Wood**—from a number of cooperating law firms that have school partnerships. The participating firms included **Akin Gump Hauer & Feld, Foley & Lardner, Fulbright & Jaworski, Steptoe & Johnson** and **Covington & Burling**.

Geoplunge from Arent Fox (cont'd)

tions for more than 30 different easy-to-learn card and trivia games. The games can be targeted to promote specific learning. This innovative and entertaining approach to geography education has received several awards.

Both the Fairfax soccer team and the students at Randle Highlands Elementary School, which has a partnership with Arent Fox, have played Geoplunge. Better yet, their understanding of geography has improved dramatically, according to Randle teachers.

The fact that Geoplunge is educational has not dampened the enthusiasm of the Randle students. “I like this game,” said one student. “I will show my sister this game, and we will play all the time at home.” “I would like to play that game every day,” said another student.

Additional information about Geoplunge is available online at: <http://www.geoplunge.com/pages/1/index.htm>.

Students Working at Covington & Burling (cont'd)

from offices all over the firm. As Helene reports, “My position helped me to learn the names and room numbers of all of the employees at C&B. At



L/R Hattie Brookshire, coordinator of Covington & Burling's Saturday academy, with Helene Traore and Wonelle Jones, summer employees from Cardozo High School.

first, it was confusing. But then, after several days, it was easy.”

Wonelle also enjoyed his work because he liked being given significant responsibility. “I feel like I have friends all over the firm, I was excited when I got the key that lets me open all the doors here. Whenever I have a chance, I open the door for the other people who work at Covington.”

Hattie Blackshire, one of the coordinators of the Saturday Academy, is very pleased with the feedback she has received about the Cardozo students, and she is sure that next year, the summer hires from the firm's partner high school will be welcomed warmly. Because the Saturday Academy program and the policy of hiring summer students from Cardozo are over a dozen years old, the firm has several permanent employees who are Saturday Academy alumni. They work in a variety of staff positions, including as secretaries and accounting department employees.

Holland & Knight Supports Poetry Reading (cont'd)

two runners-up, and the three schools that the students represented.

The championship event was the culmination of a pilot program sponsored by the NEA and the Poetry Foundation to encourage the nation's youth to learn about great poetry. During the

(Continued on page 12)

PARTNERSHIPS

Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld

Tyler Elementary School

Arent Fox

Randle Highlands Elementary School

Arnold & Porter

Garrison Elementary School

Baker & McKenzie

Payne Elementary School

Beveridge & Diamond

Birney Elementary School

Bracewell & Giuliani

Van Ness Elementary School

Covington & Burling

Cardozo Senior High School

Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky

Ellington School of the Arts

DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary

Bruce Monroe Elementary School;

Law Scout Program

Eastern, Dunbar and

Ellington Senior High Schools

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

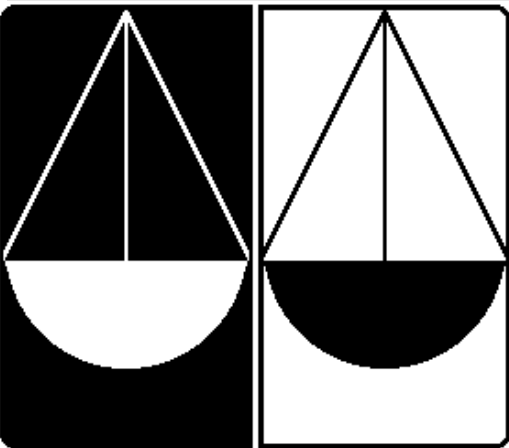
Health Right Inc.

H.D. Cooke Elementary School

Ferebee-Hope Elementary School

LaSalle Elementary School

Lincoln Middle 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

MCI

Adams Elementary 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

R.H. Terrell Junior High School

Patton Boggs

Francis Junior High School

Pepper Hamilton

Stanton Elementary School

Reed Smith

Park View Elementary School

Sidley Austin Brown & Wood

Thomson Elementary School

Spriggs & Hollingsworth

Backus Middle School

Step toe & Johnson

Montgomery Elementary School

Sutherland Asbill & Brennan

Bell Multicultural Senior High School

Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman

Adams Elementary School

U.S. Attorney's Office for the

District of Columbia

Amidon Elementary School

U.S. Courts for the D.C. Circuit

J.O. Wilson Elementary School

Washington Bar Association -

Young Lawyers' Division

Banneker and Ballou Senior High Schools

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

Seaton Elementary School

Williams & Connolly

Dunbar Senior High School

Winston & Strawn

Kamit Institute for Magnificent Achievers

Public Education Legal Services Project's

PARTNERS UNLIMITED BULLETIN BOARD

Published by the
Washington Lawyers' Committee
for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Roderic V.O. Boggs
Executive Director

Washington Lawyers' Committee
for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Iris J. Toyer, Director
Public Education Legal Services Project

Da'aga Hill Bowman, Director
Foundation Outreach and Public Information

Elinor Hart, Editor

Paula Jones, Layout

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

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

Holland & Knight Supports Poetry Reading (cont'd)

2004-2005 school year, the NEA coordinated the pilot program in Washington area schools. The program's participating students received two poetry anthologies and an original audio compact disc featuring readings and commentary by well-known writers and actors. Participating teachers received a guidebook with contest guidelines and tips on teaching poetry memorization and recitation. In Washington, more than 4,000 students participated in a series of classroom and school-wide recitation contests leading up to the regional finals at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Student Employee at Holland & Knight (cont'd)

Dominique was introduced to Holland & Knight during the 2004 holiday break, when he and his classmates accepted an invitation from their Latin teacher, Al Vollmann, to study at the firm. Al Vollmann is also a partner at the firm.

CONTRIBUTORS

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs acknowledges the following foundations, corporations and law firms for their generous contributions to the Public Education Legal Services Project:

Bank of America Foundation
Black Entertainment Television, Inc.
Bracewell & Patterson
The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
D.C. Chartered Health Plan, Inc.
Children's Charities Foundation
Dimick Foundation
Freddie Mac Foundation
Aaron & Cecile Goldman Family Foundation
The Hanley Foundation
Health Right, Inc.
Corina Higginson Trust
Kiplinger Foundation
Anthony F. Lucas-Spindletop Foundation
George Preston Marshall Foundation
Mead Family Foundation
Henry S. and Anne S. Reich Family Foundation