

2005 AWARDS OF DISTINCTION HONOR DIVERSITY, INNOVATION, AND SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

BY ROBERT E. KAPLAN

AN ADVOCATE WHOSE PRO BONO SERVICE LED TO AN IMPORTANT CIVIL RIGHTS COURT RULING. A PAIR OF LAWYERS WHO ESTABLISHED A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION TO PARTNER WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. A NEWCOMER PROVIDING DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE LEGAL CAREER SERVICES/ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FIELD. A DIRECTOR OF AN INNOVATIVE, FAR-REACHING PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATION. A JOURNALISTIC LEADER IN ADVICE FOR LAW STUDENTS.

What do these diverse individuals and entities have in common? They earned the 2005 NALP Awards of Distinction at the Annual Education Conference in Chicago on April 20.

LEADING THE FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Joshua Rosenkranz, a shareholder in the New York office of Heller Ehrman, was recognized for diversity because of his role in leading the successful challenge to a federal statute known as the Solomon Amendment. That law requires higher education institutions which receive federal funding to permit the military to recruit students on the same footing as other employers, notwithstanding the military's

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"don't ask don't tell" policy on gays in the armed forces. Because non-complying institutions risk losing their federal funding, law schools have allowed the military to recruit students, typically conflicting with schools' policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Mr. Rosenkranz served pro bono as lead plaintiffs' counsel in *FAIR v. Rumsfeld*, in which the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit declared in November 2004 that the Solomon Amendment violated the First Amendment. His nominator emphasized, "[T]his case is not just about vindicating First Amendment rights of law schools. It is also about restoring dignity to the thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered law students who have been made to feel like second-class citizens by the military's discriminatory policy. . . . It is [also] for the students who

would like to serve their country but are irrationally denied the right to do so."

IF I HAD A HAMMER

In 2002, law school classmates Roger Goldman, a partner in the Washington office of Latham & Watkins, and Scott Michel, a member of Caplin & Drysdale in Washington, founded "Buildable Hours." This innovative tax-exempt project partners with Habitat for Humanity to provide affordable housing in communities across the United States. Messrs. Goldman and Michel shared an award for innovation. "Buildable Hours," noted the nomination materials, ". . . allows participating employers to dig into their community surroundings, to get to know their summer associates in a different setting, and to tangibly demonstrate their commitment to public service."

Buildable Hours brings together financial resources of legal employers and volunteer labor of summer associates, attorneys, and low-income homeowners to rehabilitate houses. Since its inception, the organization has coordinated contributions and labor from 109 legal employers in Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, Omaha, San Diego, San Francisco, and Washington. Many of the employers participated in multi-city projects. Buildable Hours crews worked on six houses in the summer of 2004. Nine to eleven homes are planned for summer 2005, with the addition of Cleveland, Milwaukee, and St. Louis.



A RISING STAR

Kris ButleRitchie, firm-wide Professional Development Manager at McKenna Long & Aldridge, based in their Atlanta office, and formerly Director of Career Services at Appalachian School of Law in Grundy, Virginia, was recognized as outstanding newcomer to the profession. A NALP member for three years, Ms. ButleRitchie made an impact soon after joining NALP by forming an informal network of career services professionals from newer law schools to share ideas about programs and policies. She immediately became active in two committees, ultimately vice-chairing one. As 2004 Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator, Ms. ButleRitchie served on the Annual Conference Planning Committee for the recently completed Chicago conference. She has authored five articles for the *NALP Bulletin*, one of which was adapted and reprinted as a chapter in the NALP book *Perspectives on Career Services*.

Ms. ButleRitchie's nominator noted, "Kris has followed one of my most important NALP commandments, which is simply to share your knowledge and experience with fellow NALP members. . . . [She] is exactly the kind of enthusiastic, collaborative, and talented newcomer we need in our profession."

PROMOTING THE PUBLIC GOOD

The public service award went to Sudha Shetty, director of Seattle University School of Law's Access to Justice Institute. The Institute has

dual goals – to provide quality volunteer experiences for law students and to meet the unmet legal needs of residents of King County, Washington.

To achieve these objectives, Ms. Shetty oversees community-based legal organizations and in-house legal services projects. These initiatives include community justice centers providing free legal education and advice to underserved communities; an immigration court project assisting women in removal proceedings; a program for procuring unemployment insurance for battered women; a language bank which trains students who are fluent in English and another language to serve as interpreters for pro bono attorneys; and a Hague Convention Project which compiles information on international parental abduction cases. Ms. Shetty's results are, according to her nominator, "staggering": participants include 400+ students, 28 partner law firms, 150 attorneys, 38 community agencies, 700+ clients, and 6 pro bono internships with law firms.

CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH THE PRACTICE OF LAW

Student Lawyer, the magazine of the American Bar Association's Law Student Division, edited by Ira Pilchen, was selected for the writing award. With an annual circulation of approximately 34,000, this monthly publication helps students appreciate the link between law school and practice, engage in meaningful

career planning, and get a head start on establishing satisfying careers.

Student Lawyer's monthly "Jobs" column offers students tips for finding employment. "Informational Interview," a regular feature, provides a question-and-answer format with a variety of legal professionals. Lawyer professionalism and ethics are frequent themes of the magazine. The "Hot Practice" feature provides first-person accounts and resources for students who want to explore practice areas. A legal writing columnist provides pointers for preparing cogent, effective written work. By developing attorney profiles and highlighting resources involving firms of all sizes, public interest organizations, government agencies, courts, and nontraditional careers, the magazine draws readers from across the student spectrum.

The 2005-06 Awards of Distinction Committee will seek nominations in late fall 2005. Winners will be announced at the Annual Education Conference in Miami in May 2006. ■

ABOVE PHOTO FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Marcy Cox, Chair, Awards of Distinction Committee; Sudha Shetty, Seattle University, Public Service Award; Deanna Wilkinson, Heller Erhman, accepting Diversity Award for Joshua Rosenkranz; Scott Michel, Caplin & Drysdale, Innovation Award; Roger Goldman, Latham & Watkins, Innovation Award; Ira Pilchen, *Student Lawyer* magazine, Writing Award. *Not shown:* Kris ButleRitchie, McKenna Long & Aldridge, "Rising Star" Award.