

## Helping Grantees Do What They Do Best

I WANT TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. MY name is Wendy Beetlestone, and I am the new president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation. Although I've lived on three continents (Africa, Europe and, now, North America), my family has been anchored in Philadelphia for generations. That has given me a strong sense of the importance of history in the life of the city. Having spent five years as a trustee of the Bar Foundation, I have come to understand that the history of the Foundation is marked by leaders who while busy lawyers, have focused huge amounts of their time, energy and social capital to help our legal service organizations. It is thus with a deep sense of gratitude to those leaders that I take up the helm.

In this context it is appropriate that I memorialize one of the Bar Foundation's past presidents, Marvin Comisky of Blank Rome LLP, who passed away on Nov. 12. After his term as Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association in 1965, during which he initiated a program to provide legal services to the poor, Mr. Comisky continued his commitment to the disadvantaged by serving as Bar Foundation president in 1967 and again in 1984. We at the Bar Foundation honor him for his far-reaching vision and his substantial accomplishments.

I am taking the wheel from Amy Ginensky, who after a stellar two-year term, is stepping down from the Bar Foundation presidency. During that time she has guided the Foundation through some of the most trying economic times our country has ever seen. Her unwavering commitment has always been to ensure that we give our grantees the most we possibly can. In 2009, under her leadership and in keeping with her hard work, encouragement and personal dedication, the Bar Foundation gave out grants totaling \$563,000 to 33 public interest legal organizations. This was the most grant money ever given by the Bar Foundation. And in 2010 she and the Foundation's trustees have redoubled efforts to do everything we can against significant odds

to meet that number.

So, as you see, I have big shoes to fill and big challenges ahead. The economic difficulties of the last few years are not going away. Quite frankly, the future may be as difficult or maybe even more difficult for our grantees than the past. Governments are in financial trouble, and unfortunately, that impacts the funds available for social services, under which rubric civil legal services falls. Other funding sources – foundations, IOLTA, etc. – are all projecting that they will have to cut back.

We know how badly this will affect our legal services organizations. It will mean fewer staff attorneys to meet the overwhelming waves of people who need legal services but cannot afford them. So, the homeless veteran who is eligible for benefits but doesn't know it will stay homeless and sick on the streets. The family trying to untangle the title of their family home after the death of the matriarch might lose that home because there weren't the lawyers available to help them stave off foreclosure. A senior citizen suffering abuse at the hands of a neighbor might not be protected because there is not a lawyer to argue for a protection from abuse order. Or, in the bigger picture, it might mean that the next miscarriage of justice like we saw in Luzerne County goes undetected because no public interest legal organization has the financial resources to take on such a case.

We as a legal community must do everything we can to help our legal services community keep providing legal services to people who need them when no one else will. For our part we at the Bar Foundation are committed to exploring new sources of funding in 2011. We'll do that through continuing to decrease the costs and increase the profit margins of our events (the 23rd Annual Golf Classic

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coming up on June 28 and the 33rd Annual Andrew Hamilton Benefit in November) while still making sure they're fun, through cy pres awards and through ratcheting up our individual giving campaign. Of course, we expect that as they have always done, our area's law firms will continue in the generous tradition of giving through sponsorship and through the Raising the Bar program.

But I've also been developing a strategy to affect a paradigm shift to improve how the Bar Foundation, its donors and its grantees work together. We are concentrated on how we can make the Founda-

tion more relevant to our donors; how we can, in a cost-neutral manner (so as not to impact the amount of money they receive at year's end), better support and enhance the work of our grantees; and how we can do more to leverage resources and information to improve the services to our grantees' clients.

I see my job as president of the Bar Foundation as helping our grantee organizations do what they do best. If, at the end of my two-year term, I can say the Foundation, its donors and its grantees have found better ways to work together to make that happen, I plan to thank you and say, "Not such a bad job!"

*Wendy Beetlestone (wbeetlestone@hangley.com), a shareholder with Hangley Aronchick Segal & Pudlin, is president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation.*

### Memorial Gifts Recognized

From time to time, the Philadelphia Bar Foundation receives contributions or a fund in memory of someone who has died or, on a happier note, to mark a special occasion or honor an achievement. Philadelphia lawyers are a special breed. We honor them when we make a gift to the Bar Foundation that is then used to assist Philadelphia's public interest lawyers and the clients to whom they provide legal services.

#### In Memory

- **Amy B. Ginensky** and **Andrew J. Rogoff** made a contribution in memory of **Marvin Comisky**, past president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation, past Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association and chairman emeritus of Blank Rome LLP. An icon of the Philadelphia legal community for more than 60 years, Marvin Comisky will be remembered for his commitment to fairness and justice, his visionary leadership and his legal acumen.
- Given by **Ruth Katz** and by **David and Paulette Kessler** in memory of **R. Nicholas Gimbel**, a partner at McCarter & English, a Philadelphia litigator and a man of varied talents, interests and friends. We thank all who have made donations to the Bar Foundation's R. Nicholas Gimbel Fund for Legal Excellence in his memory.
- **Norman J. Weinstein**, **Douglas W. Kreitzberg** and **Deborah R. Gross**, each made donations in memory of **Edith Sirni**, mother of **Gene Sirni**, executive director of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation
- Given by **Larry Felzer** in memory of **Marguerite Lum**, mother of **Susan Heckrotte** of the Independence Foundation.

#### In Tribute

- Members of the **Board of Trustees of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation** made contributions to the Bar Foundation's grants program in honor of retiring board president **Amy B. Ginensky**.
- Given by **Marc J. Zucker** in honor of **Stephanie Resnick's** receipt of the Sandra Day O'Connor Award.
- **Rhoda Fryman** gave a contribution to celebrate **Keri Rohn** and **Nick Nykoczuk** on the occasion of their marriage.
- Given by **Susan R. Gross** to honor **Debbie R. Gross** and her never-ending fundraising work on behalf of the Bar Foundation.

## SAVE THE DATE

### PHILADELPHIA BAR FOUNDATION GOLF CLASSIC

TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2011  
THE ACE CLUB, LAFAYETTE HILL, PA.