

Welcome Message to New Associates

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the 90 new associates who joined Ropes & Gray on Oct. 22. As all of you have no doubt discovered, Ropes & Gray has a long, proud tradition of *pro bono* service. We are pleased that most of you already have helped us extend that tradition by taking on *pro bono* matters at the very start of your Ropes & Gray career.

We encourage all of you to reach out to our *pro bono* team if you have ideas about other *pro bono* projects you would like to pursue, or if you would like to learn more about available opportunities. Please email probonogroup@ropesgray.com or email/call our director of *pro bono* legal services, **Roz Nasdor** (80-7561), or our *pro bono* coordinator, **Byrne Harrison** (87-9134).

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SPOTLIGHT

Working to Make a Difference for the Homeless

The arrival of the holiday season, when many plan to gather at home with loved ones and friends, is a good time to remember that many people unfortunately lack a permanent home. Throughout the year, Ropes & Gray attorneys have devoted much time and effort to helping the homeless and the institutions that serve them.

Ropes & Gray attorneys and staff in Boston provided *pro bono* legal assistance directly to homeless men and women through the Massachusetts Legal Clinic for the Homeless, administered by the Lawyers Clearinghouse. On Feb. 28, a firm team hosted a clinic at St. Francis House, New England’s largest day shelter. On Sept. 12, a different firm team hosted a clinic at Pine Street Inn, which provides permanent supportive housing, emergency and transitional shelter, meals, job training, and other services to more than 1,600 people daily. On Nov. 21, government enforcement partner **Joan McPhee** and investment management partner **Greg Sheehan** recruited a team to staff a second clinic at St. Francis House. The strong response led to an additional clinic at Pine Street Inn on Dec. 19.

Through these clinics, firm attorneys and paralegals helped individuals with a range of legal issues, including those related to housing, Social Security benefits and record sealing (please see “Q&A” on page 2 for more details).

In addition to Ms. McPhee and Mr. Sheehan, Ropes & Gray attorneys and staff participating in the legal clinics during the year included business & securities litigation partner **John Bueker**,

tax partner **Eric Elfman** and life sciences partner **Michael Sexton**; blue sky counsel **Michael Jurasic**; associates **James Dorer**, **Andrea Giannattasio**, **Anthony Gostanian** (who coordinates staffing for the clinics), **Abigail Hackler**, **Rob Hatfield**, **Christopher Liedl**, **Monique Noel**, **David Urman** and **Christian Westra**; and paralegals **Paula Derby**, **Gil McDonald** and **Trevor Rhodes**.

Ropes & Gray attorneys also have represented Pine Street Inn itself in matters that will help the organization enhance its services.

A Boston-based team has been involved in various aspects of the repurposing and development of an existing building into approximately 30 units of transitory housing for the formerly homeless in Brookline, Massachusetts, scheduled for completion in summer 2015. Real estate partner **Jack Creedon** and associate **Ali George** are working with members of Pine Street Inn’s leadership team and others to negotiate the relationship with a tax credit investor for the project. Mr. Creedon and associate **Chris Dunn** also are working with Pine Street Inn to negotiate construction and architect contracts for the redevelopment work. Additionally, real estate and environmental partner **Peter Alpert** and associate **Andy Hogan** are researching compliance with applicable state and federal regulations.

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Jeff Katz Anthony Gostanian

Boston-based hedge funds partner and *pro bono* committee co-chair Jeff Katz and associate Anthony Gostanian discuss Ropes & Gray's participation in the Massachusetts Legal Clinic for the Homeless, an initiative of the Lawyers Clearinghouse. The firm has been participating in the clinic for 20 years, and was honored with a National Public Service Award from the American Bar Association's Business Law Section in 2012 for this and other *pro bono* efforts.

Q: Could you provide some background on the Massachusetts Legal Clinic for the Homeless?

A: The Lawyers Clearinghouse established the program in 1994 and works with nine Boston law firms to administer the clinics. Each firm hosts two or three clinics per year. Ropes & Gray hosted four clinics in 2014 – two at St. Francis House, a day shelter in Boston, and two at Pine Street Inn, a Boston night shelter. The firm typically has six to eight representatives at each clinic, organized into teams of two attorneys or one attorney and a paralegal, depending on who is attending.

Q: Can you describe a day at the clinic?

A: Each clinic generally runs from about 9:30 a.m. to about 2 p.m. Each team will typically interview two to four shelter guests who are seeking legal assistance. Lawyers Clearinghouse staff members prescreen each matter, and an experienced legal aid lawyer meets with the lawyers at the end of the clinic to provide guidance. The viable cases then are taken back to the firm and handled to completion, typically by the team that conducted the interview.

Ropes & Gray teams have assisted clinic clients with a wide variety of matters, including those involving housing applications, Social Security disability benefits, SSI applications, criminal record-sealing requests, creditor or collection issues, civil disputes, and unemployment benefits. This range illustrates one of the most interesting aspects of staffing the clinic – when you walk through the door you never know what kind of matter you're going to get.

Q: What aspects of the work do you find most gratifying?

A: The legal issues usually differ from those we typically handle, which makes the work interesting. More than anything, though, the people we meet often are hard-working people who simply are having difficulty getting through a particular process, and have pretty compelling stories. It's an opportunity to work directly with people who really need help. When you're able to help someone get disability benefits, for example, it can be life-changing for them. It's also great when you can help someone overcome something. For example, we had a client who was an alcoholic but had gotten sober and was looking for a job. He had an arrest record from years ago, however, and wanted to get his records sealed. It was great to be able to get that done and eliminate that barrier for him. Just being represented by a lawyer, especially a Ropes & Gray lawyer, makes a huge difference in the lives of these clients.

Firm Advises IRS on Ebola Relief Issues

Acting for *pro bono* client International Senior Lawyers Project, a team of Ropes & Gray tax lawyers recently provided information to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that on Oct. 29 helped persuade the IRS to issue tax guidance that provides tax relief to persons contributing to efforts to aid Ebola victims in West Africa.

The Ropes & Gray team worked with the IRS National Office on the issue, supplying background information cited in the guidance in support of the "disaster relief" determination. The treatment of the affected area of West Africa as a "qualified disaster" under Internal Revenue Code § 139(c)(4) is a novel application of the relief to a medical crisis; the IRS previously exercised this authority outside the United States on just six occasions, and only in cases of natural disasters caused by earthquakes and tsunamis. This should help get more funds to aid the Ebola relief efforts.

The Ropes & Gray team included tax partners **Rom Watson** and **Lorry Spitzer** (both of Boston), and tax counsel **Morey Ward** (Washington, D.C.). **Stephen Shay**, a retired Ropes & Gray partner and Harvard Law School professor, assisted on the project.

Stacy Tromble Named DC Volunteer Lawyers Project 2014 Volunteer of the Year

Government enforcement associate **Stacy Tromble** (Washington, D.C.) recently received the 2014 Volunteer of the Year Award from the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project, a nonprofit organization that provides *pro bono* family law assistance to low-income Washingtonians. In announcing the honor, the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project noted that Ms. Tromble worked the most hours of any of its volunteers during 2014 and commended her outstanding diligence, excellent judgment, and strong problem-solving and investigative skills. The organization also cited her work on specific cases, each involving a custody dispute over a young child.

"We are so grateful for Stacy's hard work and dedication to her child clients, and feel fortunate to have her among the lawyers in D.C. who are helping to safeguard the lives of at-risk children," the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project noted.

In addition to working on cases with the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project, Ms. Tromble arranged for the organization to present two training sessions at Ropes & Gray's Washington, D.C. office, each of which was open to attorneys from the greater Washington legal community. One session equipped attorneys to serve as court-appointed guardians *ad litem* for children in disputed custody cases; the other prepared attorneys to represent domestic violence survivors seeking civil protection orders. These sessions were among five *pro bono* trainings that Ms. Tromble arranged for the Washington, D.C. office in 2014. Other trainings addressed issues such as aiding survivors of commercial sex trafficking, representing immigrant children facing possible deportation from the United States, and assisting residential *pro se* litigants, both landlords and tenants.



Making a Difference for the Homeless

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Ropes & Gray also helped Pine Street Inn in connection with the Walnut Avenue Apartments mixed-use development in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, scheduled to be completed in 2015. **Jack Creedon** and associates **Garin Muranaka** and **Matt Stoller** (both of New York) worked with members of the Pine Street Inn leadership team to negotiate a property management and tenant support services platform (and related financing matters) for the project. The development will include approximately 30 affordable studio apartments for formerly homeless individuals and an approximately 20-bed medical respite facility, with Pine Street Inn managing the residential component and offering on-site support and counseling services for residents.

In Washington, D.C., Ropes & Gray associates **Kia Grant** and **Lisa Guo** provided *pro bono* research assistance to the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH). The associates helped WLCH analyze laws and regulations enacted in various U.S. jurisdictions related to the preservation of affordable housing when property owners opt out of the project-based Section 8 (of the Housing Act of 1937) rental assistance program. Ms. Grant and Ms. Guo conducted research to identify laws and regulations enacted across 10 jurisdictions, analyzed constitutional challenges that have been litigated surrounding those laws and regulations, and consulted with regulators from various jurisdictions to discuss the effectiveness of those laws. They also drafted commentary on a proposed bill by Mayor Vincent Gray that would amend the District of Columbia's Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act.

Finally, two Boston associates regularly provide valuable assistance to the nonprofit organization that publishes *Spare Change News*, a semimonthly newspaper that addresses issues of homelessness and is sold primarily by homeless men and women. **Katie Waite** and **Michael Doore** respectively serve as clerk and assistant clerk of the board for the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Homeless Empowerment Project. As clerks of the board, they attend monthly board meetings, help with governance issues and keep minutes for the board. They also help coordinate legal support for the Homeless Empowerment Project as needed, including contract review and drafting, tax advice, and other ongoing legal matters.

At a time when a comfortable home serves as the setting for many a holiday celebration, it is inspiring to reflect on the efforts so many Ropes & Gray colleagues have made during the year to make a difference for those whose holiday wish is a warm and safe place to live.

Partnering with KIND to Help Unaccompanied Minors Find Their Way

The number of minors entering the United States alone – often fleeing abuse, gang violence and other threats in their homelands – has grown significantly in recent years. To help these children, Ropes & Gray has partnered with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), a nonprofit organization that arranges *pro bono* legal representation for unaccompanied refugee and immigrant minors entering the United States.

Ropes & Gray has worked with KIND in Boston for several years and this year has expanded that work to the New York and Washington, D.C. offices.

Highlights of the firm's KIND-related work in 2014 appear below.

- A New York-based firm team obtained permanent residency for a Guatemalan orphan who came to the United States alone in 2009, fleeing physical, emotional and sexual abuse from her grandfather. She was placed in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement in Texas and released to an adult “sponsor” in the New York City area whom she did not know. The sponsor failed to meet her basic and educational needs, and extorted money through threats of deportation. Even though the young woman spoke little English, she enrolled herself in school, where a teacher ultimately connected her with KIND, which brought her case to Ropes & Gray in March 2012.

Business restructuring partner **Anne Pak** and associates **Maura Flaherty**, **Alexandria Perrin** (now of San Francisco) and **Rodrigo Valle** (now of Tokyo) obtained lawful permanent resident status for the young woman in March 2014 by first securing Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. The client has since obtained GED certification and has enrolled in community college.

- Associate **Dan Chirlin** (New York) and a colleague from his prior firm secured guardianship and an order of special findings to support an application for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for a 16-year-old who had been detained last year after crossing the U.S. border at the end of her trek from El Salvador. After spending two months in a detention facility, the young woman was released to her aunt in the Bronx and faced a deportation proceeding before an immigration judge.

On July 25, a Bronx family court judge ordered that the young woman's aunt be granted full guardianship status over her, and made further special findings in support of the client's application for Special Juvenile Immigrant Status. The young woman is now eligible to obtain expedited legal residency status in the United States.



Ropes & Gray Honored for *Pro Bono* Work

As the year draws to a close, Ropes & Gray is proud to have received some recent honors for our *pro bono* service. Thanks to all whose efforts played a role in this noteworthy recognition.

Law360 2014 “Pro Bono Firm of the Year”

Law360 profiled Ropes & Gray as a “Pro Bono Firm of the Year” for 2014 in an Oct. 22 feature. The firm was recognized for the over 115,000 hours that attorneys and professional staff devoted to *pro bono* work in 2013 – a figure more than double the number of annual *pro bono* hours logged only six years earlier.

The feature also highlighted the firm’s work with Lambda Legal in Louisiana to safeguard the rights of low-income people living with HIV, and the firm’s involvement with the Massachusetts Pay for Success Initiative in partnership with Third Sector.

The American Lawyer’s Grand Prize for Global Citizenship

On Sept. 15, *The American Lawyer’s* annual Global Legal Awards recognized Ropes & Gray as a co-grand prize winner of the Global Citizenship Award for the firm’s *pro bono* work with The Nature Conservancy to preserve imperiled coastal areas in small island nations through debt-for-climate adaptation swaps that forgive some of a developing country’s debt in exchange for conservation measures. Among other activities, the firm has helped The Nature Conservancy establish national-level trusts in the Seychelles, Grenada, Antigua and other island nations. These trusts serve many important purposes, including supporting long-term management and expansion of marine protected areas and funding of restoration projects.

Honored at The Legal Aid Society’s 2014 Pro Bono Publico Awards

At The Legal Aid Society’s 2014 *Pro Bono* Publico Awards ceremony in New York on Oct. 8, Ropes & Gray received a 2014 Award for Innovative *Pro Bono* Assistance to The Legal Aid Society and its Clients. The firm was honored for its work on two *pro bono* initiatives – one involving litigation to end abusive treatment of inmates at Rikers Island and other New York City jails, and one involving staffing of a weekly legal clinic at Hostos Community College in the South Bronx.

Ropes & Gray and Third Sector Named Boston Business Journal Corporate Citizenship “Partners of the Year”

Ropes & Gray and Third Sector Capital Partners were recognized as “Partners of the Year” by the *Boston Business Journal* at the publication’s annual Corporate Citizenship Summit, held this year on Sept. 10 in Boston. The Partners of the Year awards program honors connections between businesses and nonprofits; Ropes & Gray and Third Sector were recognized for working together to help launch the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success Initiative, an innovative social impact financing program that aims to reduce recidivism among young men who are in the probation system or exiting the juvenile justice system.

Pro Bono Honor Roll

To date, 640 Ropes & Gray attorneys and more than 50 staff members have performed 20 or more hours of *pro bono* service during 2014. Congratulations to all of them. Click [here](#) to view attorney list. Click [here](#) to view staff list.

Pro Bono Committee

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