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August 2019

August 9, 2019

2019 has been a time of transition for Pullman & Comley's Diversity Committee. After years of leadership by Jess Grossarth Kennedy and Jill Bicks the torch has been passed to Judge Lynda Munro (Ret.) and Kelly O'Donnell to lead the committee as co-chairs. Jess's leadership deserves special mention as she created Pullman's Diversity Committee five years ago and put her heart and soul into putting Pullman & Comley's diversity efforts on the map. She has been a trailblazer and we would not be where we are today without the benefit of her tireless efforts. The following is a summary of activities and additional diversity and inclusion work from Pullman & Comley over the last six months.

Centennial Year of Service

As part of Pullman & Comley's 100 year anniversary "Centennial Year of Service" we are giving back to the broader community that has been such an integral part of our success. In the first half of the year, many of our "Year of Service" efforts focused on working with local nonprofits including FoodShare, nOURish, the Center for Children's Advocacy and others. Visit our Facebook page for additional information and photos from our service projects.

Partnering with Junior Achievement

As another "day of service", several P & C attorneys volunteered for a program entitled "JA-In-A-Day". This program was hosted by Junior Achievement (JA) of Southwestern New England, in partnership with P & C and People's United Bank. Along with the volunteers from People's Bank, P & C attorneys were assigned to kindergarten through 4th grade classrooms at Jumoke Elementary School in Hartford and presented a lesson plan prepared by JA on financial literacy, workforce readiness and entrepreneurship. It was an especially rewarding experience for both the volunteers and the students. Special thanks go to Jon Kaplan for organizing this event.

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Meanwhile, in Bridgeport several Pullman attorneys including Jill Bicks participated in the **JA speed networking program** with People's Bank, helping high school students from Bridgeport prepare for job interviews. It is our second year participating in this event. Participants find it a great experience.

Community Outreach

Connect-Us

Attorneys Karen Wackerman and Jill Bicks coordinated the firm's effort to host a Connect-Us Academy intern for 6 weeks this summer. Our internship program gave one Bridgeport based college student the opportunity to spend time working in various departments within our firm.

Attorneys Jessica Grossarth Kennedy and Jill Bicks also attended the Connect-Us MLK Day performance at The Klein Auditorium in Bridgeport, where more than 150 multiracial and economically diverse children and teenagers from throughout Fairfield County sang, danced and recited poetry, monologues and raps. The children also read from letters they wrote to Dr. King sharing their own dreams.

Lawyers' Collaborative for Diversity

This summer we have been delighted to host a Lawyers' Collaborative for Diversity ("LCD") undergraduate intern, who is an international student from Beijing, China. In April, Pullman hosted its Annual Fairfield County Networking Reception in our Bridgeport office where LCD member organizations, attorneys and law students came together to network and share their experiences. Also in April our own Jess Grossarth Kennedy, Jill Bicks and Bob Hinton, attended the LCD General Counsel Panel Discussion, and Gary O'Connor and Bob Hinton met over lunch with a LCD mentee/law student who is a lifelong resident of Waterbury.

Mike Kurs, Tom Wilkeson and Mark Sommaruga were among those who attended the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity's 15th anniversary celebration. P & C was a proud gold sponsor of the event, and has been a proud supporter of LCD throughout the years.

Lastly in the first half of the year, Jess Grossarth Kennedy continued her participation with LCD's Strategic Planning Committee -- a small group chosen by the LCD President to generate a strategic plan proposal for the LCD's board's consideration. Jess also attended several LCD board meetings in the first six months of the year at which general LCD business, events and finances were discussed.

Crawford Black Bar Association

A dozen Pullman attorneys attended the George Crawford Black Bar Association Annual Awards Dinner. We were all pleasantly surprised when it was announced that Erick Russell was the winner of the Association's inaugural Rising Leader award. P & C was a proud diamond sponsor of the dinner (and is also proud of Erick).

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Additionally, Mike Kurs and Bob Hinton attended the Crawford Black Bar Association program entitled “Black Women in the Legal Profession: Where We’ve Been and What’s Next,” featuring, among others, Judge Vanessa Bryant.

Connecticut Bar Association

Throughout the first half of 2019 P&C’s attorneys were actively involved in the diversity and inclusion efforts of the Connecticut Bar Association (“CBA”). In February, Jess Grossarth Kennedy and Erick Russell attended an LGBT Section meeting held at The Republic in Hartford at which Polly Crozier, Senior Staff Attorney at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, discussed her work in New England on youth and family law issues, with a focus on the Uniform Parentage Act and her work in New England to update parentage laws to be more inclusive and protective of children born to LGBTQ people. Monte Frank has also been participating in calls of the National Conference of Bar President’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee and am co-producing a program called “Getting Out of Your Own Lens” for the Annual Meeting in San Francisco on August 9th.

Recruitment

In May, our firm was proud to welcome four summer associates through the joint P&C/Yale New Haven Health System (YNHH) Diversity program. The associates joined us from UCONN and Quinnipiac Law Schools and spent a total of 10 weeks with P & C.

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