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CHBA
Newsletter

○ Winter
2008/
Spring
2009

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHBA MEMBERS AND PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE.

CHBA *focus*



Toni Rosario-Smith Featured in CT Law Tribune

One of our very special members, Toni-Rosario Smith, was recently featured in the prestigious CT Law Tribune in an article written by Joan Lee as follows:

Toni Smith-Rosario wishes she could say she is "some kind of superwoman." But she says it's not so.

"I could not do as much as I do without an incredibly supportive husband (Luis Smith-Rosario), who has chosen to work as a teacher so he is there after school with our daughter, Gabriela," says Smith-Rosario, who for the past 11 years has worked as a prosecutor in the Appellate Bureau of the Chief State's Attorney's Office.

But while handling the appeals of criminal cases is a big job, what sets Rosario apart is her commitment to the profession outside of her job.

In 2007, she was awarded the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity's Edwin Archer Randolph Award for efforts to promote diversity within the profession. She was honored, in part, for helping found the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association, serving as its first woman president, and joining all four of the state's bar associations for people of color.

This year, she served on the Public Service and Trust Commission, which developed the strategic plan for the Judicial Branch.

"Judge Joseph Shortall and I co-chaired the committee on access, which dealt with a variety of issues, including access [to the legal system] for persons of limited English proficiency and those with physical or mental disabilities," said Smith Rosario. The panel also looked into policies that addressed the balance between the public's right to know and privacy concerns of people involved in court cases.

Smith-Rosario is now co-chairing one of the implementation committees for the strategic plan, the one related to people of limited English proficiency. The committee hopes to improve courthouse signage, interpreter access and public information in other languages.

If that's not enough Smith-Rosario is also president of the Hartford Courant Foundation, vice president of Hartford's Shelter for Women and a member of the board of the Connecticut Bar Foundation. She runs the mentoring and scholarship programs for the foundation.

"Both my job and outside commitments are challenging," she said. "I often work long hours in the evening and on weekends, and I have had to learn to say 'no' to things to maintain some balance in my life. I am constantly making hard choices about how to spend my time." (Continued on page 3)

LCD Launching New Mentoring Program for Junior Associates

By Erik Diaz



Over the past year, representatives from the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity ("LCD") have been meeting with leaders from Connecticut legal organizations and the Co-chairs of the LCD

Associate Advisory Committee, Rene Ortega, Associate at Day Pitney and Erick I. Diaz, Associate at Wiggin and Dana, to design and launch a pilot cross-organizational mentoring program for junior attorneys in Connecticut to help retain talent of color in the state.

The Cross-Organizational Mentor Program ("COMP") was discussed recently at a reception hosted by Edwards, Angell, Palmer & Dodge LLP in Hartford on November 12, 2008. There, Co-chairs of the LCD Associate Advisory Committee explained the program and encouraged people to sign up.

The aim of the program is to provide junior attorneys in Connecticut an opportunity to be paired with an experienced and successful attorney from either a firm, a corporation or a public organization. Part of the rationale for pairing a junior attorney with a more experienced attorney from a different organization is that sometimes a junior associate may feel uncomfortable to discuss certain mentoring issues with someone from within his or her own organization.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the program is that, instead of LCD pairing the mentees and mentors, the mentees will be given access to a database describing the mentors' backgrounds, so that mentees can rank their preferences for mentor. Based on the mentees' preferences, the mentees and mentors will be matched on a first come basis. Once a match is made, LCD will provide the mentee the mentor's contact information so that the mentee may contact his or her mentor.

The program is currently seeking mentors and mentees. Anyone, regardless of racial or ethnic background, may sign up for the program. If you are interested, the forms are available at: www.lawyerscollaborativefordiversity.org. Although the forms indicate that the deadline is past, LCD has converted the program to a rolling basis program. Thus, mentees and mentors may sign up at any time.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS



Date	Location
May 12, 2009	Day Pitney LLP, Hartford Office
June 9, 2009	TBD
July 14, 2009	TBD
August 11, 2009	TBD
September 15, 2009	TBD
October 13, 2009	TBD
November 2009	TBD
16TH ANNUAL AWARDS CELEBRATION	
December 15, 2009	TBD
January 12, 2009	TBD
February 9, 2009	TBD

BLAST FROM THE PAST

By Joaquin Madry



On November 14, 2008, the CHBA held its 15th Annual Awards Celebration. The event was held at The Hartford Club in Hartford. The keynote speaker was Dr. Estella R. Lopez, Director of the Latino Policy Institute at the Hispanic Health Council and President of the Latino Endowment Fund. Dr. Lopez has excelled in the field of education, having served in senior administrative roles at the University of Puerto Rico, Northeastern Illinois University and the Connecticut State University System, where she was Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs. In 2007, Dr. Lopez was honored as Latina Citizen of the Year by the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission.

Additionally, several law school students were awarded scholarships from the CHBA Scholarship Fund. The 2009 Scholarship recipients include: Maria I. Garriga of UCONN Law, Carminia M. Munoz of Quinnipiac University School of Law, Jasmine Marie Rojas of Western New England Law School, and Maryann Lio of Yale Law School.

(Continued from page 1)

When her daughter was younger, Smith-Rosario declined many more opportunities. "I never missed a single play or school event; even if it meant that I had to work at night or on weekends," she said. "In the past few years, I have felt able to become more involved now that my daughter is older. She is a superb student and musician (cello and piano) and will be attending high school next year.

"I am so proud of her, but I can see that she does not need me as much as she did before," Smith-Rosario continued. "She gets more embarrassed by my attention, like most teenagers, though she still needs me."

Civil Rights Era

Ask a few questions about Smith-Rosario's background, and it's clear where her motivation to do good deeds comes from.

"My mother, who is a black Puerto Rican and the direct descendent of an African slave, was subjected to racial discrimination after coming to the U.S. from Puerto Rico at the age of 12," Smith-Rosario said.

Her mother's family moved to New York because another daughter had a heart defect and the family wanted to be in a place where there was good medical care. Her grandfather, a minister, helped Puerto Rican farm workers in New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

Smith-Rosario's mother eventually went to the Hartford College for Women, where she earned tuition money by cleaning bathrooms. Her father was a scholarship student at Trinity College. The two met during the civil rights movement and they were active as community organizers in an organization called the Northern Student Movement. They got married before the U.S. Supreme Court wiped out laws that banned mixed marriages, and the Episcopal priest who married them in her father's home state of Maryland was afterward forced out of his church.

"My dad's parents, who were very progressive and good people, were also ostracized," said Smith-Rosario. "My father's father actually integrated the Boys' Club in their town."

Smith-Rosario was born in 1968 and grew up in the North End of Hartford, a city that experienced six days of race riots in 1970.

"Having grown up during a time of tremendous racial polarization, I wanted to bring people together and to act in constructive ways," she says. "I met my husband, who was one of only three Puerto Rican students in our honors classes, when I was in middle school. It helps tremendously that he understands my motivation and supports me."

Smith-Rosario went to Harvard as an undergraduate, then Yale Law School. She clerked for two judges and spent two years in private practice at Robinson & Cole. It was while serving as a clerk for state Supreme Court Justice Richard N. Palmer that she was inspired to be a prosecutor. "I was so impressed by his concern for the rights of criminal defendants," she said. "I realized how important it was to [also] have prosecutors who are fair and open-minded."

While clerking at the Supreme Court, Smith-Rosario saw a woman her age arguing a case before the justices, and was inspired to work for the Appellate Bureau. But her inspiration to become active in other causes clearly comes from parents and grandparents who preached the importance of making the world a better place. "I am motivated by a strong desire," says Smith-Rosario, "that my daughter live in a more just world."

WELCOME!!

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