

# center news

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Photo: From left, Erik Fogel, Founder and Executive Director of the New York City Urban Debate League, Ashley Meija, New York City Urban Debate League Debater, and First Lady Michelle Obama.

## From Baking Cupcakes to Making History

*How Brown Rudnick's investment in a single after-school debate program grew into a city-wide debate league recognized by First Lady Michelle Obama as one of the leading after-school programs in the nation*

The New York City Urban Debate League (NYCUDL) has received a Relationship Grant from the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation for the last three consecutive years to help establish and advance a debate league in New York City. The NYCUDL's mission is to close the education and civics achievement gap by providing the best opportunities, resources and training so all students can become Great Debaters. The league has achieved rapid expansion and broad success. In late 2012, they were recognized by the White House.

We recently chatted with the NYCUDL Founder and Executive Director, Erik Fogel, about the success of the league and the recent recognition by the White House (story continued on page 3).

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## Winners of 9th Annual Holiday Card Contest for Boston Public School Students Announced & Celebrated

In December, the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts of Massachusetts (“VLA-MA”), a program of the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston, announced the winners of its 9th annual Holiday Card Contest for Boston Public High School students. Created to support arts education in Boston Public Schools, the contest provides an opportunity for educators to engage students in an art enrichment program. The contest was initiated with a grant from the Foundation and with assistance from the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, as well as through the support of the Boston Public Schools.

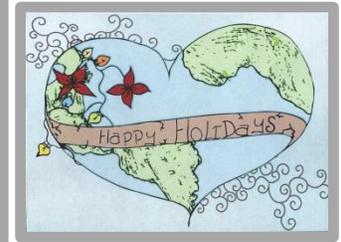
Contestants, along with their teachers and families, gathered to celebrate at an awards reception hosted by the contest sponsor, the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation at the law firm of Brown Rudnick LLP. Each winning student received an award certificate and art supplies.



The 2012 honorees were:

### Tied for First Place:

Winter House (by Molly McNutty, Senior, Boston Latin Academy)  
Happy Holidays Around The World (by Yamilet Acevedo, Junior, Madison Park High School)



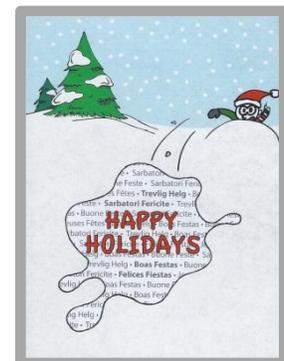
### Third Place

I Still Love You On The Cold Days (by Cierra Morson, Senior, Boston Latin Academy)



### People's Choice Winner

Felices Fiestas (by Ismarelys Santiago, Senior, Madison Park High School)



## The White House Recognizes the New York City Urban Debate League



Recently, The New York City Urban Debate League (NYCUDL) received an award from the First Lady and was featured in a story in the *New York Daily News*. Read more about this honor on page 3.

## From Baking Cupcakes to Making History

*(Continued from page 1)*

**Tell us why and how you founded the debate league.**

**Erik:**

I'm a public school teacher and big believer in the power of debating for education. The kind of oppositional thinking encouraged by debate clearly contributes to critical thinking and leadership skills.

In 2008, we started a debate team with just our school in the South Bronx, Bronx High School for Law, Government and Justice. This is a Title I school where the majority of students were on free lunch and either African American or Hispanic American. I knew a free debate program would be greatly beneficial to the inner-city students who did not have the opportunity or access to participate in other debate leagues. We bootstrapped the project, and I was quite literally baking and selling cupcakes to fund the program.

Almost immediately, the students received great value from their participation. The program helped them to improve their literacy and reasoning skills, and helped them develop poise and confidence. I knew we needed to continue the program, but bake sales would only get us so far.

**How did you begin partnering with the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation?**

I heard about the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation grants program while I was at another school. In 2010, when I started the debate team at Bronx High School for Law, Government and Justice, I applied for the Foundation's annual Relationship Grant to purchase laptop computers for our debaters to put them on the same technological level as our competition from better-resourced schools, as well as to help fund our travel to competitions. The Foundation's assistance made a huge impact on the success of the program and our ability to get it to the next level. We were able to offer free debate education opportunities to all students at our school. We transformed our small Title I school located in the nation's poorest congressional district to national debate champions -- the first Title I school to ever do so!

In our second year, the New York City debate league collapsed due to lack of funding, and debate coaches and teams from across the City sought our help in keeping debate alive in our schools. Our geographic footprint expanded to all New York City. We went from five participating schools in 2011 to 50 schools, and in 2013 we are aiming to have 75 schools signed up.



(L to R)  
Starr  
Arroyo,  
Stephanie  
Nyame,  
Yaira  
Brito,  
Ashley  
Mejia with  
teacher  
Erik Fogel.

In October 2012, in addition to funding from the Foundation, the law firm of Brown Rudnick provided pro bono legal representation to help us to obtain 501(c)(3) status, which allows us to pursue different types of funding and support. Thanks to Brown Rudnick, we are rebuilding a successful and sustainable nonprofit that for the first time will provide free debate education opportunities to all New York City students. This is historic. Brown Rudnick is making history for legal education in New York City.

**Tell us about your recent visit to the White House.**

The NYCUDL received the prestigious 2012 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, which honors community-based arts and humanities programs that are effective in developing learning and life skills in young people.

On November 19th, we visited the White House to receive the award from First Lady Michelle Obama. Students from the Bronx High School for Law, Government and Justice and I accepted on behalf of the NYCUDL. It was a remarkable moment for both our debate league and for the students. When I was baking cupcakes to run the program, I never envisioned that one day soon we'd be standing with the First Lady at the White House.

**What's on the horizon for 2013?**

We will use the 2012-13 Relationship Grant to help expand debate opportunities for all New York City debaters by providing free local and regional tournament opportunities so the best of our debaters can break through the glass ceiling and compete against the very best debaters across the state, region and nation. This is a historical and pivotal time for an explosion of legal education in New York City, and Brown Rudnick is helping us every step of the way.

The Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest has been our greatest champion. The Foundation has been the number one financial contributor to the NYCUDL for three years now, and Brown Rudnick Partner Katy Gardner and Associate Steven Cheng are our pro bono lawyers. We literally would not have a New York City debate league today without Brown Rudnick.

Clearly, it's not up for debate. Brown Rudnick and NYCUDL are a winning team.

# Recent Community Grant Recipients

## Supporting an Environmental Responsibility Program at Boston Schools

East Boston High School received a Community Grant in support of a multi-faceted educational and waste-reduction campaign at Mario Umana Academy. Specifically, the grant will be used in conjunction with the educational program to initiate a recycling campaign for disposable water bottles. The campaign will be designed and led by sixth graders at the Umana School.

The reusable water bottle program will educate both middle and high school students about waste reduction and water conservation, while decreasing the amount of waste created at the schools. East Boston High School students will serve as campaign leaders and mentors to middle school students. The program will offer a supplementary curriculum, field trips, graduate student speakers from MIT and Harvard, as well as community-based hands-on activities related to water resources and the environmental impacts of personal choices. Additionally, there will be individual and classroom contests to promote the use of reusable bottles and minimize disposable drinking devices.

*"We are grateful for the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation grant, which will help us establish a program that will educate approximately 200 Mario Umana Middle School Academy students about environmental issues. Additionally, it will help reduce waste in the school and promote better environmental practices among the students."*

-- Kristen Cacciatore Ph.D., East Boston High School Chemistry Teacher and grant applicant

## Supporting an Autism Education Program in Boston

The Foundation awarded a Community Grant to the Curley K-8 School for the purchase of iPads and cases for four classrooms serving children with autism. Curley K-8 School is a Boston Public School in Jamaica Plain that offers services for students with autism spectrum disorders. The program is called PACE (Practical Academic Community Education).

*"Our students with autism learn best through visual support. Today, technology provides high interest and visually stimulating curriculums, and by utilizing iPads, we hope to increase access to the general curriculum for our special needs students."*

-- Colleen Leary, Boston Public School Autism Strand Specialist and grant applicant

## Helping a New York School to Update Its Library

The Harlem Academy, an independent day school serving first through eighth graders in Harlem, New York, received a Community Grant to help the school update its electronic cataloging services for students in the school library so students can more easily check out books.

*"Limited family income, which often means an absence of books in the home, provides a challenge to our students being able to cultivate an interest in reading for pleasure outside of school. Availability of school library books can address this challenge. Funding for updated software and technical support for an electronic catalog system will allow the library to better support the literacy needs of students at Harlem Academy. We are appreciative for the support of the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation."*

-- Celia Dillon, Harlem Academy teacher and grant applicant



## New Center Website!

As part of the second phase of Brown Rudnick's web rebranding, a new Center for the Public Interest website was launched in December. The site's new look is intended to better align the Center's branding and online presence with that of the Firm's new website and is also more dynamic, user-friendly and content rich. Please take a look at the new Center website which we believe conveys the passion, commitment, and modern approach that is central to the people and mission of the Center and the Charitable Foundation.

[www.brownrudnickcenter.com](http://www.brownrudnickcenter.com)



## Accepting Applications for Community Grants

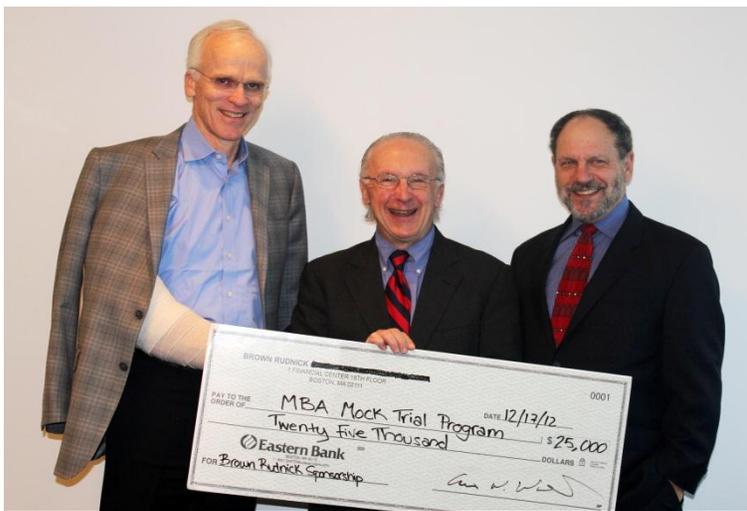
Each month the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation accepts applications for educational grants to support inner-city educators through its *Community Grant* Program. Created to support front-line educators who often do not have a voice in funding decisions, the *Community Grants* subsidize small, concrete projects, which will improve inner-city education within Boston, Hartford, London, Providence, New York, or Washington, DC within the coming year. The grant applications and an explanation of the program can be found at <http://www.brownrudnickcenter.com/foundation/community-grant>.

## Brown Rudnick Gives \$25,000 to 2013 MBA Mock Trial Program

Brown Rudnick, through its Center for the Public Interest, donated \$25,000 to the Massachusetts Bar Association's 2013 Statewide High School Mock Trial Program. Brown Rudnick has been the lead financial underwriter since 1998 and has contributed more than \$400,000 to the program, in its 28<sup>th</sup> year.

*"We are indebted to Brown Rudnick for its unwavering support of the MBA's successful Mock Trial Program. This critical program educates young people across the Bay State about the intricacies of the court system while broadening their leadership skills."*

-- MBA President Robert L. Holloway Jr.



In photo from left to right: Joseph F. Ryan, Chief Executive Officer, Brown Rudnick LLP; MBA President Robert L. Holloway Jr.; Albert W. Wallis, Executive Director of the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest. Photo courtesy of Brown Rudnick LLP.



## Brown Rudnick Donates to Red Cross to Support Communities Affected by Hurricane Sandy

Through the Firm's Center for the Public Interest, Brown Rudnick made a \$25,000 contribution to the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund in support of emergency disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

## Center Delivers 2013 Calendar

In what has become a New Year tradition, the Center released its annual calendar, which captures some of the memorable activities and accomplishments from 2012. Please contact Kellie Cahill at [kecahill@brownrudnick.com](mailto:kecahill@brownrudnick.com) to receive a copy of the Center's 2013 calendar.



## Brown Rudnick Contributes to Scholarship Fund for Sandy Hook Victims

Brown Rudnick donated \$5,000 to the scholarship fund established by the University of Connecticut. The UConn scholarships will support Sandy Hook students in kindergarten through grade 4 and will also be made available immediately for siblings and dependents of those who died. Tom Ritter, a Partner in Brown Rudnick's Hartford office also helped organize a vigil/fundraiser for December 21, 2012 in the lobby of 185 Asylum Street, Hartford, where the Firm has an office.

## The Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation Expands to London

In December, the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation expanded its educational grants program to include London.

Additionally, the Foundation elected two new Foundation Board Directors from the Firm's London office – Partner Patrick Elliot and Associate Christian P. Toms. Patrick Elliot is a Partner in Brown Rudnick's Bankruptcy & Corporate Restructuring Group, and Christian Toms is an Associate in the Firm's Litigation & Arbitration Group. Together, with Foundation President Jeffrey Jonas, Executive Director Al Wallis, and fellow Board Directors in the U.S., Patrick and Christian will review and approve grant applications and help facilitate collaboration between Brown Rudnick's London office and grant recipients.



Foundation  
Board Director  
Patrick Elliot

*Foundation President, Jeffrey L. Jonas, said, "The Foundation's vision is part of the very fabric of the Firm and makes us all better lawyers and better people. Like the most effective community programs, the Foundation has evolved over time, bringing its resources and influence into new geographies to reach those in need and introduce new initiatives that support inner-city schools and non-profit educational programs. We are pleased to include the London community in our mission to advance innovative educational programs."*

The Foundation is currently accepting applications from front-line educators and those working for schools or education-related NGOs for its Community Grants. Community Grant proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis with one grant awarded each month. Additionally, London educational programs will be eligible to apply for the Foundation's annual Relationship Grants when the Foundation issues its annual request for proposals in the spring of 2013. These grants typically range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. More information about Foundation grants and how to apply can be found at [www.brownrudnickcenter.com](http://www.brownrudnickcenter.com).



Foundation  
Board Director  
Christian Toms

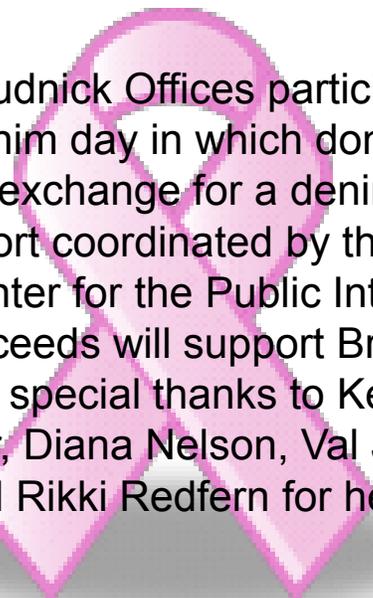
In 2011, Brown Rudnick expanded its pro bono mission to London and currently receives referrals of potential legal cases from LawWorks, which screens clients for income and substantive eligibility. To help coordinate pro bono matters, the Firm, through its Center for the Public Interest, created a Pro Bono Steering Committee in the London office which is led by Partner Neill Shrimpton and Associate Christian Toms. In December, London lawyers led by Neill Shrimpton and Christian Toms, joined by Center Executive Director Al Wallis, hosted the Executive Director and staff from LawWorks for lunch in the London office. For the past year and a half, Brown Rudnick has been working with LawWorks on pro bono legal matters. The lunch was both a "thank you" and an exploration as to how to grow the relationship for mutual benefit.



London office LawWorks luncheon.

## Brown Rudnick Supports Breast Cancer Research

All Brown Rudnick Offices participated in Lee National Denim day in which donations were accepted in exchange for a denim day. This year, the effort coordinated by the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, raised \$1,475. Proceeds will support Breast Cancer Research. A special thanks to Kellie Cahill, Denise Kaer, Diana Nelson, Val Jones, Judy Downey and Rikki Redfern for helping coordinate.



## Brown Rudnick's Robert Harris Is Appointed to Board of Bar Examiners by Supreme Judicial Court

The Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court announced the appointment of Robert L. Harris, a Partner in Brown Rudnick's Litigation Department, to the Board of Bar Examiners for a five-year term. Robert fills the position previously held by Attorney Martin W. Healy, whose term expired. The Board of Bar Examiners, consisting of five appointed by the Supreme Judicial Court, is responsible for the examination and review of qualifications of all persons seeking admission to the Massachusetts Bar.



### who said that?

*"I always enjoy visiting The Providence Plan and seeing the actual impact of the charitable giving. Sitting down with the people who work within the programs which receive funding from the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation is very inspiring, and I leave our visit each year with a sense that we are doing the right thing and that our efforts are making a real difference in people's lives. Frankly, the experience is energizing.*

*The needs are far too great, especially in these challenging times, but the Firm's grants programs really make a difference in a significant way. The "thank you" notes we receive back from those receiving grants clearly reflect our positive impact."*

*-- Edward D. Pare, Partner, Brown Rudnick's Providence Office*



## Holiday Giving

Several Brown Rudnick offices coordinated personal charitable donations for those in need during the holiday season. Here are three examples:

- The Hartford office had 100% participation in Thanksgiving related contributions to the Foodshare Campaign.
- The Center coordinated the annual holiday gift drive for children in care of the state Department of Children and Families. 45 needy children were “adopted” by people in the Firm who purchased gifts for these children.
- Emma Quinn, a Trainee Solicitor in Brown Rudnick’s London office, volunteered with Crisis@Christmas, a charity for single homeless people dedicated to delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change. Emma also raised just under £1,000 in donations for the charity.



## Giving for a Cause: It's in Our Jeans.

During Pro Bono Week at the end of October, the Brown Rudnick DC Office participated in the annual "Go Casual for Justice" denim day. Proceeds benefitted the DC Bar Foundation's legal services programs. This effort was coordinated by the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, and Rikki Redfern in the DC Office.



## Wallis is Principal for a Day

The Center's Executive Director, Al Wallis, served as Principal for a Day at Boston Latin School, shadowing Headmaster Emilia Pastor, and fellow Principal for a Day, John Wolf of Bank of America.



Participants of the St. Francis House homeless legal clinic.

Recently, Brown Rudnick Boston attorneys led a legal clinic for the homeless at St. Francis House. The clinic was done in conjunction with the Boston Bar Association's Lawyers Clearinghouse. Boston and Hartford attorneys conduct several of these clinics annually.

## just us

*“Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.”*  
- Chinese Proverb

My work provides frequent opportunities to visit schools. I am reminded each time, as I observe the student-teacher interaction, that in the schools where our Center strives to help, the teacher's work is so demanding, the students' challenges are so great and the stakes are so high. I am aware anew of how much of the future – for the individuals in the classroom and, in some sense, for the world itself – is being shaped right then, right there in those teacher-student interactions. Usually, I leave the school with a sense of hope. Most of the teachers are giving it their all and many of the students appear to be engaged and learning. The Center's support is a small boost towards their success. It is good to visit these classrooms.

Occasionally, though, much more is happening. The teacher is charismatic and seems to have a sixth sense that allows him/her to engage simultaneously with each student while motivating them forward together as a collective classroom. Often the teaching is *hands-on*, involving active participation by students in something that they “get” is larger than themselves.

The students in these classrooms are all engaged, eager, excited and alive. The learning happening and the transformation occurring is tangible. Visiting a classroom like this is great. I leave those schools with a bouncier step, a strong sense of optimism for the future and with a deep admiration for that transformational teacher. He or she is a hero, really. Profiled elsewhere in this newsletter is one such teacher, one who went from baking cupcakes to the White House with the inner-city students he has inspired. Erik Fogel is one of those transformative teachers who is the reason for my optimism. Thank you, Erik, for the opportunity for our Center to be part of your success.



*- Al Wallis*  
*Center Executive Director*