

## Florida – Law Schools

# Picnic Sparks Mentoring Relationships For Law Students

By Jairo G. Cano

Widespread support from Florida's judiciary, law firms and organizations attracted a thousand picnicers to the Third Annual Minority Mentoring Picnic last month to celebrate and encourage diversity throughout the state's legal community. The picnic provided a fun-filled venue for judges, lawyers and other legal luminaries to mingle with minority law students from around the state.

The picnic concept developed three years ago when John Kozyak, founder of Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton, PA, ran out of space at his home and firm for the networking receptions he hosted for minority law students. The popularity of the picnic grew first among students at the University of Miami and then branched out to other minority law student associations in South Florida. Last year, the picnic was expanded to all of Florida's minority law school students raising attendance to more than a thousand people including at least 50 judges.

Mr. Kozyak works closely with bar associations, ranging from the broad-based – such as the Florida Bar – to the specialized – such as the Cuban Ameri-

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The Honorable Janet Reno joins Florida law students at the Annual Minority Mentoring Picnic held in Hialeah.

can Bar Association and the Florida Association of Women Lawyers – to develop successful mentoring programs for the students. The picnic provides a great venue for students to talk with leaders from Florida's legal community who, like Florida Supreme Court Justice Peggy A. Quince, freely share their experience and provide advice to students.

The goal is to have every law student who attends the picnic to go home with

at least one mentor. If they do not have a mentor when they arrive, they're given a "Need Mentor" sticker, and the lawyers and judges seek them out. "Need Mentee" stickers are given to lawyers, too.

"Mentoring relationships give minority law students a better chance at succeeding," explained Linda Kleinman, Director & Chief Division Counsel, Southeast Toyota Distributors, LLC and member of the Board of Directors

of the South Florida Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel. "The relationships students develop with legal professionals through the picnic and other networking events provide them an opportunity to seek guidance and practical tips for excelling as law students and eventually as members of the legal community.

"A diverse legal team is particularly important for corporations. An increasingly diverse workforce and customer base make diversity a business imperative," Ms. Kleinman observed. "As a member of Southeast Toyota's legal team, I am well aware of how important diversity is for corporations trying to stay connected with employees, retailers and consumers in an increasingly diverse marketplace."

While the focus was on making the connection between law students and professionals, the picnic also offered a host of children's activities to enable parents to focus on the mentoring and networking opportunities. ACC's South Florida Chapter sponsored a "fun zone" featuring a great variety of activities for children of all ages – ranging from arts and crafts for younger children to rock climbing and monster golf for those more adventurous.

"We are very grateful for the generous support of Florida's in-house legal community, which helps each year's picnic to be better than the last," said Mr. Kozyak.

## Corporate Counsel Organization Highlights

### National Task Force On Diversity In ADR

The face of the legal profession has changed greatly over the course of the last two decades: women and minorities are entering the field in ever-increasing numbers, and they are making their presence known in leadership positions more than ever before. Diversity in the ADR profession, however, lags far behind. This is bad news not only for the obvious reason – that we have a societal obligation to correct injustices done to individuals historically discriminated against – but also because it's not good for ADR. As Charles Morgan, Executive Vice President and General Counsel for OnSite E-Discovery commented, "No one in their right mind would purposely choose to hire lawyers from only one law school, or having only one background or one perspective."

To that end, the International Institute for Conflict Prevention and Resolution (CPR Institute) called together the National Task Force on Diversity in ADR. On November 7, the task force met to share their work in the field.

Jennifer Jester Coffman of American Arbitration Association reported on the AAA's diversity efforts. She discussed the 2003 AAA "Shared Commitment to Diversity" statement, concentrating on diversity in its work force, its Board, and its neutrals. Ms. Coffman noted the advances made in many of these areas (such as AAA staff diversity and training, and neutrals composition). Crystal Gothard of the Minority Corporate

Counsel Association reported on the group's activities in the advocacy, retention and promotion of women and minorities in corporate law departments and law firms through conferences, smaller dinner meetings, publications, and research. Marvin Johnson reported on JAMS' support of his and Marvin LaRue's work to encourage women and minorities in ADR through the initiative Access ADR, an effort to make those persons who select neutrals more aware of skilled neutrals existing outside the narrow pools from which they usually draw.

Stradley Ronon Partner Bennett Picker said the Task Force is an opportunity to meld the profession's need for increased jobs with the corporate need for more diversity in its outsourced professionals. He suggested an audit to put more concrete expectations on legal suppliers. Promulgated by corporate clients, the audit would first probe their law firms' commitment to ADR (the frequency of negotiation training, the regularity of recommending mediation). Law firms would then be asked how many women and minorities were in the firm, how many were assigned to second-seat negotiations, arbitrations and mediations, and so on. The strategy would be to gather data but also convey a clear message: we, the client, expect you to develop sophistication in ADR, and to ensure that women and minorities are included in that development.

### Letter From The President Of The Central Florida Chapter Of The Association Of Corporate Counsel

To The Readers Of *The Metropolitan Corporate Counsel*:

We serve in-house counsel in the Orlando metropolitan area working for entertainment giants, aerospace companies, religious groups, hospitality providers and other diverse industries. Our chapter adds value to their day-to-day practice through educational programs, networking events and public service.

Among our outreach programs, we worked with the Florida A&M University School of Law Placement Director to establish its Law Student Mentor program in which more than 20 of our members participated. Additionally, our chapter obtained from the MCCA a grant to fund two law students to further the development of an internship curriculum that could be used by corporate legal departments.

For this year's National Community Service Day, our members contributed to making Florida a better place to live and work by adding muscle power to Ivey Lane Elementary School's beautification project of the school grounds. Co-sponsors Co-Advantage Resources, Inc.; Harvard Yard Landscape and Maintenance; Foley & Lardner LLP, and Sonny's Real Pit Bar-B-Q helped to make it a fun day that was enjoyed by all.

Co-sponsored by Ford & Harrison LLP, our chapter's CLE program last month focused on what corporate counsel need to tell their boards, executives and management about the major employment law issues of 2006. Topics included attendance and leave issues under the ADA, FMLA and Workers' Compensation Law; privacy issues in the electronic workplace; and immigration issues.

I welcome all in-house counsel in Central Florida to come to our events. To learn more, visit our chapter's website at [www.acca.com](http://www.acca.com) or contact our Chapter Administrator Marshall Schirtzer at [mschirtzer@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mschirtzer@cfl.rr.com).

Sincerely,  
Debbie Ashley