

Pro Bono Representation Assists Communities and Worthy Causes

Law firms use their expertise to help those in need.

Compiled by John Joseph Parker
Contributing Editor

Many people and organizations lack the financial resources to hire attorneys, even though they need their help. That's why pro bono representation is so important—vital to so many communities and worthy causes. Here are some examples.



Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC

By Daniel A. Schwartz, Esq.,
Managing Member

CSG has a longstanding commitment to pro bono involvement and has been honored to support the missions of many of the state's most well-deserving organizations. A particularly notable ongoing engagement has been for Girls on the Run New Jersey East, a youth development program for third- to eighth-grade girls that uses running as a platform to instill life skills and promote holistic health outcomes. Lindsay Dischley, a Member with our Employment Group and a GOTR NJE Executive Board Member for the past six years, has led our involvement with the rapidly growing organization. GOTR NJE has doubled its employee infrastructure to serve more girls in New Jer-

sey across its five-county footprint, and CSG's counsel has enabled this scale-up by ensuring that the organization is well-positioned to continuously attract and retain high-quality staff in a competitive hiring market for nonprofits. This past year in particular, CSG has helped GOTR navigate the pandemic in a variety of ways, including assisting with employee relations, honing cybersecurity policies and incident response plans, and advising on contractual issues as they arise. By providing legal counsel at no cost, CSG has empowered GOTR NJE to focus its resources on funding its critical programming, and thus make an impact on the lives of more girls in our local communities.



Gibbons P.C.

By Patrick C. Dunican Jr., Esq.,
Chairman and
Managing Director

Led by the Gibbons Diversity Initiative and the Gibbons Cares pro bono program, Gibbons launched a new pro bono effort in 2020 in conjunction with the firm's first Juneteenth holiday commemoration. The initiative is a partnership with the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership (IFEL) in its "Small Businesses Need Us" program to assist women and minority small business owners impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic. IFEL created Small Businesses Need Us in response to the struggle many small businesses are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related business shutdowns and slowdowns. The program aims to mobilize and activate professionals throughout the business community to pool their experience to help small businesses survive and recover from the impact of COVID-19. Through the initiative, volunteers with various specialties required for day-to-day business operations, including legal service providers, are organized into cross-functional teams and matched with participating small businesses based on those organizations' specific needs. Gibbons attorneys have the opportunity to assist various small women- and minority-owned enterprises on a pro bono basis in a wide range of legal practice areas, including corporate, employment, real estate, intellectual property, and data privacy and security, among other types of legal services these businesses may need.



Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland & Perretti LLP

By Michael R. O'Donnell, Esq.,
Co-Managing Partner

Riker Danzig provided pro bono legal support to Matriark Foods, which received a grant from ReFED and partnered with a community food rescue organization during the COVID-19 pandemic to rescue and upcycle food that otherwise would have gone to waste and then to distribute it to food-insecure individuals in New Jersey. Matriark Foods works with farmers and aggregators to make use of the 40% of vegetables that would otherwise go to waste in the fields. They also work with food service providers to utilize the hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh-cut remnants from food preparations. The project rescued 620,000 pounds of food—and the equivalent of more than 500,000 meals—over a 90-day period. If this food had been disposed of rather than rescued and upcycled, it would have generated greenhouse gases in excess of 20,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. In addition there were significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions associated with rescuing the food for human consumption. Riker Danzig advised on insurance and contracting issues relating to the project, and provided counsel on the novel legal issue of whether liability protections for donated food extend to upcycled food. 🍌



Photo: Getty Images/stockphoto

Girls on the Run New Jersey East uses running to instill life skills and promote holistic health.