

## CENTER CONNECTIONS | *SPRING 2019*

---

### CONGRATS TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE ANNUAL *M. ROBERT DUSHMAN AWARDS*

At Brown Rudnick's Annual State of the Firm on March 13, new Firm Chairman and CEO William Baldiga announced the recipients of the 12th Annual Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest *M. Robert Dushman Pro Bono* and *Community Service Awards*. These two awards honor: (1) a successful Brown Rudnick attorney; and (2) a staff member, each of whom, in his/her professional or personal life has demonstrated the qualities and commitment to the public interest that distinguished the Firm's late partner, M. Robert Dushman.



The *Pro Bono* Award was presented to Boston partner **ELIZABETH RITVO**. During Liz's tenure at Brown Rudnick, she has devoted over 900 hours to pro bono engagements. Liz has also served as one of the original directors of the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation and devoted significant attention to Boston Bar Association activities as a member of the Amicus Brief Committee and Boston Bar Foundation grants committee. It is noteworthy that, as a new Brown Rudnick lawyer, Liz was mentored by Bob Dushman.

*Pictured left: Elizabeth Ritvo and Center Director Al Wallis; Pictured right: Jeannie Mendez and Partner Catherine Castaldi.*

The *Community Service* Award was presented to **JEANNIE MENDEZ**, a member of the Firm's support staff in the Orange County office since 2013. Jeannie is outstanding at her job, but she contributes much more than that to our world. For years, Jeannie has taken care of children at her church while their parents attended services. Most recently, she has been helping a woman in the church who took on responsibility for four babies who were not receiving proper care. Jeannie has been going to the woman's home for the last six months to help her care for the babies.



As part of the Dushman awards, Brown Rudnick will make two \$2,500 contributions to non-profit charitable organizations, one each chosen by Liz and Jeannie.

## CENTER SPOTLIGHT

---



### SHINING A LIGHT ON THE IMPACT OF PRO BONO AND DIVERSITY

Liz Ritvo, the 2019 recipient of the *M. Robert Dushman Pro Bono Award*, was also recognized during the State of the Firm address by having a new Firm award named in her honor: the Elizabeth A. Ritvo Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Award. This first-ever award honors Brown Rudnick individuals who have demonstrated a personal commitment to making the Firm more equitable and inclusive.

Liz's contributions to the legal community in Boston and to the Brown Rudnick community are impressive and worthy of recognition. In 1985, Liz became the first female equity partner at Brown Rudnick. She broke the glass ceiling, enabling women across the Firm, and the legal profession, to see what is possible. She has mentored countless lawyers, both men and women. She has been an advocate for the disadvantaged, and a champion of diversity.

We asked Liz to reflect on her career and these awards, as well as the importance of Dushman pro bono and the Ritvo Diversity Award in Brown Rudnick and the law firm community.

1. **Describe how pro bono work has been a constant throughout your legal career.**

I worked alongside Bob Dushman for many years, and I am honored to receive the pro bono award in his name which reminds of his character and his career-long commitment to public service. I have engaged in a wide variety of public interest work on matters ranging from press and speech rights, employment, discrimination, special education and immigration to amicus briefs on gun control and criminal law. Through my work in support of our Center's pro bono mission and organizations such as the Boston Bar Association and the Boston Bar Foundation, I have seen the many ways we as lawyers can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who cannot afford counsel and those who need an advocate to assert and protect their legal rights. And, by protecting the legal rights of individuals, our pro bono work more broadly serves to protect and preserve the rights of all in our community.

2. **Why do you think diversity and inclusion are so important to a law firm's success?**

A strong law firm is one that understands and appreciates the backgrounds and skills of all who work there - its professional and its support staff. To succeed in today's business world and best serve the needs of its clients, a firm needs to develop and promote the talents of a diverse and inclusive work force. This makes for better business and makes

for better lawyers, both within their firms and in the communities in which they work and live.

3. **What would you say to young attorneys about the importance of public interest work as part of their practice?**

Pro bono work can be a part of our early legal careers and can allow us to work on issues that are important to us personally and professionally. There is not one path to finding public interest work that is meaningful and that makes a difference to those in our communities. What matters is to get engaged and begin to share the legal skills we have for those in need.

## NEWS FROM THE FOUNDATION

---



### COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation awards small, a one-time grant to improve inner city education roughly once a month. See our [website](#) to apply.

#### Community Grants were recently awarded to:



**Langley Elementary (Washington, D.C.)** to fund the construction of a Sensory Garden for special education students. Students will spend time in the Garden following kinesthetic activities and before academic programming, or as needed to help them self-regulate emotions following upset or frustration. The grant funds will be used to purchase various garden materials including planters, soil, seeds, plants and a fountain.

**Henry Gradstein Elementary School (Queens, NY)** to build a Sensory Path made up of colorful stencil shapes that are permanently adhered to the floor and walls of one the school's hallways. The Path will encourage students to move, engage their senses, and have fun where recess and physical education resources are limited. Funds will buy the tools and supplies to make the sensory path decals and adhere them to the floor and walls of the school.



## RELATIONSHIP GRANTS ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

The Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation awards one-year programmatic grants annually, commencing with the academic year in September. See our [website](#) for more information.

### Orange County, CA.'s Century High School Seniors Are College Bound



On May 3, Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation Relationship Grantee Century High School held their “Top 30 Students” luncheon. Pictured are 29 of the school’s 30 top-performing seniors, who shared the college choices and majors to inspire their younger peers. The Foundation helps support the academic success of economically disadvantaged students at Century High School by funding college visits and placement test preparations.

### London's Mousetrap Theatre Projects Visits London Office

Brown Rudnick’s London office hosted a lunch workshop with 15 youth from Foundation Grantee Mousetrap Theatre Projects. Brown Rudnick support staff met with the students and discussed their careers and shared what it's like to work in a law firm. Mousetrap is a theatre education charity dedicated to bringing the magic of theatre into the lives of disadvantaged young people, using theatre as a catalyst to explore ideas, learn new skills, develop creativity and offer new perspectives. The event was organized by Peter Wozny and Tobias Plowman in the Firm’s London office.



## CENTER PRO BONO NEWS

---



### Street Vendors' Class Action Victory in New York City

In conjunction with New York City's Urban Justice Center, Brown Rudnick recently succeeded in reaching a class action settlement agreement filed in Federal Court on behalf of over 300 NYC street vendors who have had their food carts confiscated by the City. Our clients asserted that the City seized the carts and, in many cases, apparently lost or trashed them, without providing the vendors with any required vouchers or receipts. The Court

approved settlement commits the City — without admitting to any wrongdoing — to paying about \$188,000 to more than 300 street food vendors whose carts were confiscated without documentation, and requires improved training in policing street carts.

Brown Rudnick attorneys **Daniel L. Day** and **Justin Weddle** championed the street vendors' cause. Through the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, Dan and Justin served as pro bono counsel on the case, which resulted in the settlement agreement with the City. Final approval of the agreement is currently pending in Federal Court. We asked Dan, an associate in Brown Rudnick's White Collar Defense & Government Investigations group, to tell us more about the case and its significance.

"Many of the food carts are operated by immigrants, who are bringing their own culture and cuisine to the city, which enriches us all."



*Daniel Day*

When asked why he was drawn to this case, Dan said, "I have an affinity for street vendor food. It is part of the fabric of the city and is what makes New York a remarkable place to live and visit. Additionally, many of the food carts are operated by immigrants, who are bringing their own culture and cuisine to the city, which enriches us all. Unfortunately, these immigrants were not able to protect themselves through the legal process when they had their food vending property seized and allegedly destroyed by the City of New York without due process.

When I learned of this injustice, I felt compelled to act, and I am grateful that Brown Rudnick and its Center for the Public Interest were supportive. Representing the street food vendors was a challenging and rewarding experience. The settlement is the result of over one year of

extensive class discovery and settlement negotiations with the City of New York. It is reassuring to know that affected street vendors will be both fairly compensated for their losses and that City employees will be trained to follow proper procedures when handling street vendor property, regardless of whether the vending property is manufactured or homemade.”



Brian Alosco



Tyler Lewis

### **Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts: A disabled Massachusetts artist gets the benefits she deserves.**

In May, Brown Rudnick Associates, Brian Alosco and Tyler Lewis, achieved a great outcome in a pro bono matter referred to the Firm through the Center's relationship with the Massachusetts Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Brian and Tyler represented an artist who alleged that she had been wrongfully terminated by her former employer based on her disability. The unrepresented client originally filed a pro se complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). Brian and Tyler were subsequently engaged to evaluate her claims and to represent her at the MCAD mediation. They faced off against a partner at another large firm and ended up with a resolution that was nearly four times larger than the original severance offer made to our client. The client's unemployment benefits had run out, and this settlement gives her several more months of income while she tries to find a new position.

### **Boston Legal Clinic: Representing the Homeless**

In March, Center Executive Director Al Wallis and Brown Rudnick Partner Greg Sampson led a team of associates from the Boston office to conduct a free legal clinic at the Cardinal Medeiros Center for the homeless. The Boston Bar Association's *Lawyers Clearinghouse* organizes these clinics throughout the year at nine shelter locations, in partnership with 15 Boston law firms and in-house legal departments. Those served must be homeless, using shelter services, or otherwise income eligible for free legal services. Each year, as a result of this clinic, the Brown Rudnick team has taken on pro bono cases assisting homeless and low-income individuals.





### Center Public Interest Accolade to Paris Partner Hervé Le Lay

In the Firm's Paris office this past April, a Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest Accolade was presented to Partner Hervé Le Lay in recognition of his extraordinary efforts to establish a pro bono and charitable relationship with the Fondation des Femmes, an organization advocating for women's rights in France. Presenting the award, and also meeting with the Paris office to discuss the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation and the Center's future involvement in Paris, were (left to right in photo) Al Wallis (Center Executive Director), Jeff Jonas (Foundation President) and Steve Wasserman (Foundation Treasurer).

### 2019 Summer Associates Engage through the Center

The Center hosted its annual orientation for Brown Rudnick's Summer Associate class in May. The "summers" will be involved in several volunteer and public service projects during their time at Brown Rudnick. Two of these projects include:

- **ADL Summer Research Project**

Each year, one of the signature pro bono projects for the Summer Associates is the annual Anti-Defamation League ("ADL") Summer Associate Research Project in which the summer associates, under the supervision of a partner, research cutting edge civil rights legal issues.



- **"Serving the Underserved" at Rosie's Place**

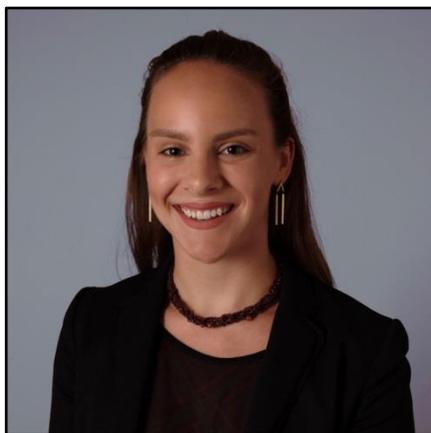
On May 31st, Volunteers from the Brown Rudnick Boston office (including Boston Summer Associates) served lunch at Rosie's Place, a sanctuary for poor and homeless women and long-time Brown Rudnick pro bono client.





## JUST US

### ANGELA NITSCHKE JOINS THE BROWN RUDNICK CENTER FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST AS THE NEW CENTER COORDINATOR



As a key member of the team, Angela will manage day-to-day administrative operations for the Center and The Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation Corp. She will also serve as the liaison to and for Executive Director Al Wallis, helping to set the tone and establish the image and sense of mission for both the Center and the Foundation.

Angela brings strong intellectual, administrative and logistical experience to her new role. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Government from St. Olaf College in Minnesota. While at college, she did constituent service work for Senator Amy Klobuchar. Prior to joining the Center, Angela was the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Development at Boston Medical Center, and is the co-owner of a floral design studio. Angela has a wealth of volunteer experience including:

- Volunteer & Project Manager of **“Young At Heart”** where she helped to design a student volunteer project in coordination with the Northfield, MN Retirement Center, with a goal to bridge the generation gap in the Northfield community.
- Volunteer with **Minnesota Youth in Government** where she assisted children grades 7-12 in preparing for a Model United Nations conference with simulations, research, and paper-writing exercises.



*Pictured right: Angela leading Center Volunteer effort at Rosie's Place shelter for homeless women.*

Angela joined the Center in February, and has already made great contributions to the Center with her intelligence, creativity, insightfulness, organizational abilities and sense of humor.

What good fortune.

For three years, Elizabeth McGeoy served as the Center Coordinator. Liz did everything: organized and led volunteer activities; created Center events; and led all administrative efforts, including the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation grant selection and implementation process. She coordinated the Center budget and sent out donation acknowledgments. She went to external events, steered our pro bono approval and tracking processes, took minutes, and answered phones. She was graceful with corporate clients, homeless clients, elderly clients, teens and toddlers. She provided sound advice and a steady hand at all times. Even with all of these responsibilities and accomplishments, Liz continued propelling her intellectual and professional growth, attending Northeastern University at night, after work, and earning a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Management.



There are many remarkable qualities that Liz possesses. But one that impressed and impacted me most profoundly, on a daily basis, was her consistent and sincere positivity in any situation. She made everything difficult easier, every challenge more likely to be met, and turned each doubt into a genuine possibility. What a gift it has been to work alongside her.



A few months ago, Liz accepted the offer of a great new opportunity for her career path. Congratulations, Liz, and thank you for all that you brought to Brown Rudnick and to the Center. Your time with us has been wonderful, impactful and fun.

It is certain that your talents and outlook will continue to carry you far in your career and your life --in fact, I am positive of it!

*positivity*



---

Please contact Al Wallis or Angela Nitschke to discuss any matters regarding the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest. Thanks especially to Angela and to Lisa Murray for their enormous assistance with this newsletter. And finally, apologies for any errors or unintentional omissions, which may occur from time-to-time in the Center Quarterly - maybe even this one.