

For Immediate Release

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Katten Announces Recipients of 10th Annual *Pro Bono* Service Awards

CHICAGO – Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP is pleased to announce that it has selected 10 attorneys to receive its top honor for *pro bono* service. This year's recipients of the firm's 10th annual *Pro Bono* Service Awards are a Chicago-based Litigation and Dispute Resolution team consisting of partners [Stuart J. Chanen](#) and [Rachel Vorbeck](#), and associates [Patrick C. Harrigan](#) and [Aaron M. Chandler](#), along with Trusts and Estates associate [Tye J. Klooster](#). In New York, Corporate partner [David A. Pentlow](#) and Trusts and Estates associate [Yvonne M. Perez-Zarraga](#) are honored, with Intellectual Property associate [David B. Sherman](#) receiving honorable mention. Also recognized with Katten's top honor for *pro bono* service are Los Angeles Trusts and Estates associate [Boryana V. Zeitz](#) and Charlotte Litigation and Dispute Resolution associate [Christopher A. Hicks](#).

This year's award recipients provided *pro bono* services in a wide array of legal situations, including the following:

- Securing exoneration and release from prison of a young man who was convicted at the age of 13 of a murder he did not commit and who had already spent more than 16 years unjustly incarcerated
- Providing critical organizational guidance to low-income entrepreneurs through the NYC Small Business Solutions incubator project
- Protecting the assets and dignity of an elderly immigrant whose children had her wrongly placed in an Alzheimer's ward and attempted to sell her home
- Running a program through which adoptions are secured for children emerging from the California foster care system
- Securing guardianship for a mentally disabled victim of Hurricane Katrina so that she could obtain FEMA benefits
- Organizing fellow Trusts and Estates lawyers to provide estate planning services to low-income clients of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago
- Securing tax-exempt status and providing corporate counseling for charities serving street children, shut-ins, young athletes, and preservers of ancient cultures

This year's *Pro Bono* Service Awards will be presented during ceremonies in each recipient's office location between July 14 and July 21. Judge Charles P. Kocoras of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of

Illinois will present the awards in Chicago, while Steven Sheinberg, Associate Director of Legal Affairs for the Anti-Defamation League will present in New York. In Los Angeles, Judge Florence-Marie Cooper of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California will present the awards, and Judge Timothy L. Patti of the Mecklenburg County (NC) Superior Court will present in the Charlotte office.

“The recipients of our 10th annual *Pro Bono* Service Awards have made outstanding contributions to charitable and nonprofit causes across the country,” said [Vincent A. F. Sergi](#), Katten’s National Managing Partner. “These individuals embody Katten’s long-standing commitment to helping the poor, the powerless and the disenfranchised obtain first-rate representation without charge.”

The *Pro Bono* Service Awards include a \$1,000 honorarium, which recipients will donate to a charity of their choice. The following summaries highlight the recipients’ *pro bono* work:

The Katten legal team of **Stuart J. Chanen, Rachel Vorbeck, Patrick C. Harrigan** and **Aaron M. Chandler (Chicago)** represented Thaddeus (T.J.) Jimenez in a wrongful conviction case. T.J. was incarcerated at age 13 with a 45-year sentence for a murder he did not commit. Throughout the years that T.J. was in prison, the real murderer remained at large.

T.J. came to the Center on Wrongful Convictions in the summer of 2005, and Katten agreed to provide a team of lawyers to assist on a fully *pro bono* basis. At that time, T.J.’s case was “dead in the water.” Two separate juries had convicted T.J. and both convictions had been affirmed on appeal. Over the past four years, Katten lawyers and paralegals, working closely with attorneys from the Center, logged more than 1,300 hours fighting for T.J.’s release. On May 1, 2009, after T.J. had been wrongfully imprisoned for 16 years, two months and 27 days, the team was successful in obtaining his release. On the day of T.J.’s release, law enforcement, relying on evidence gathered by the Katten team and the Center, arrested a man who had confessed to the murder on tape, even before T.J. was originally tried. T.J. has received a certificate of innocence from the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County and a statutory wrongful conviction judgment from the Illinois Court of Claims.

The Katten team will be donating their honorarium to the Northwestern Center on Wrongful Convictions in recognition of the work they do each day on behalf of innocent men and women wrongfully incarcerated.

Tye J. Klooster’s (Chicago) *pro bono* work includes the administration of insolvent estates, drafting wills and trusts, preparing deeds, and the formation and administration of 501(c)(3) public charities. Tye has taken a leadership role within Katten’s Trusts and Estates Practice, coordinating work with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, Illinois’ largest provider of free legal services to the poor.

Since joining the firm in the spring of 2005, Tye has done extensive *pro bono* work with the formation of 501(c)(3) public charities; in fact, his two most memorable cases involved such matters. In the first, Tye aided in the formation of the charitable organization Kindness, Compassion and Caring, which enlists volunteers to provide companionship to the elderly by visiting them in their homes on a weekly basis. In another memorable *pro bono* case, Tye worked with direct descendants of the Mayan people in the creation of the Mayan Folklore Organization, a 501(c)(3) public charity. The goal of this organization is to promote, educate and train individuals on the culture and music of the Mayan people.

Tye is donating his honorarium to the Attack ACC Foundation.

David A. Pentlow (New York) logged well over 100 hours of *pro bono* work in 2008 and has averaged nearly 50 hours a year since joining the firm in 2000. He became involved in *pro bono* service as a way to help struggling artists. In his first and most memorable *pro bono* case, David worked with the Rising

Phoenix Repertory, a small theater company, to ensure that the theater survived and was able to raise funds while setting its own artistic agenda and priorities. He is still in contact with the principals at the theater.

Throughout his career, David has continued his work with nonprofit organizations dedicated to the arts on numerous *pro bono* matters, including assisting with incorporations and 501(c)(3) applications, working on mergers, advising on the choice of organizational entity and jurisdiction for entrepreneurs through the NYC Small Business Solutions incubator project and providing general contract advice.

In addition to the *pro bono* matters he handles personally, David acts as a catalyst for *pro bono* work for other transactional lawyers in the New York office by screening transactional *pro bono* matters, recruiting other attorneys to work on them and providing supervision.

David will donate his honorarium to the Robin Hood Foundation.

David B. Sherman (New York) has completed approximately 250 hours of *pro bono* work during his legal career, work that has allowed him to help people in need while gaining valuable, practical legal experience. During his time at Katten, David has performed *pro bono* work on a wide range of legal issues, including the protection and exploitation of intellectual property, student free speech and the First Amendment, and obtaining protective orders for domestic violence victims, for organizations including VOLS, NYC Business Solutions, the Anti-Defamation League, Dances Patrelle (a professional ballet company based in New York), the Courtroom Advocates Project, South Brooklyn Legal Services and the City of New York.

David also works as an administrator and advocate for the VOLS Microenterprise Project with NYC Business Solutions at the Science, Industry and Business Library of the New York Public Library. The goal of this project is to provide first-rate *pro bono* legal assistance to low-income microentrepreneurs, including providing one-on-one representation on business-related issues and intellectual property matters, and making group presentations on basic legal issues for start-up and small businesses.

Yvonne M. Perez-Zarraga (New York) has logged well over 300 hours of *pro bono* service throughout her legal career. Since joining the firm as a summer associate, Yvonne has participated in Katten's South Brooklyn Legal Services program. Her work has included interviewing clients suffering from AIDS and preparing their estate planning and health care documents. She has also been active in the arts, working with the Riedel Dance Theater on incorporating and filing for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, and advising the New York Philharmonic on the rules applying to charitable organizations in structuring corporate sponsorship deals.

In her most memorable *pro bono* case, Yvonne assisted the daughter of an elderly Hurricane Katrina victim in becoming appointed as her mother's guardian. The elderly woman's home was demolished by the hurricane, and as she was suffering from dementia, she needed the help of a guardian to collect FEMA benefits and other aid. Yvonne was able to get her daughter guardianship pursuant to Article 81 of the Mental Hygiene Law.

Yvonne is donating her honorarium to HELP From NYC, Inc., an organization that researches issues impacting impoverished communities across the globe. The organization coordinates with grassroots nonprofits to promote sustainable solutions that cater to the needs of local populations.

Boryana V. Zeitz (Los Angeles) has consistently been involved in *pro bono* service since joining Katten, averaging more than 150 hours of *pro bono* work per year for the past three years. Boryana runs the Public Counsel Adoption Program out of the Los Angeles office, through which attorneys assist low-income parents with the adoption of children from the foster care system. The attorneys of the Public Counsel Adoption

Program help adopting families access adoption assistance benefits and any special services needed by the children, many of whom suffer from physical and emotional disabilities and need financial help to live functionally and comfortably. The Public Counsel Adoption Program is the largest *pro bono* project run continuously from the L.A. office, in terms of both the attorneys who volunteer their time and the *pro bono* clients served. Boryana also serves as a *guardian ad litem* for four foster children in a lawsuit against various entities and has assisted special needs individuals on numerous matters.

In addition to her work with children in foster care, Boryana has assisted in the creation of several nonprofits, including Collegiate Animal Trust, Madhouse Inc., Street Kid Support and Dog Beach Now, and continues to advise these groups.

Boryana was also a recipient of Katten's 2007 *Pro Bono* Service Award. She is donating her honorarium to Dog Beach Now.

Christopher A. Hicks (Charlotte) has demonstrated a consistent commitment to *pro bono* service since joining the firm in 1999, averaging nearly 100 hours of *pro bono* work each year. Chris became involved in *pro bono* through his work providing legal services to the elderly and has worked on issues ranging from landlord-tenant disputes and estate matters to the cleanup of environmental contamination. He has also been active in protecting the elderly from fraud. In one of the most important cases Chris has worked on, he successfully represented an elderly British national whose daughter brought her to the United States and placed her in an Alzheimer's ward, although the woman was not sick with the disease. The woman's daughter then used power of attorney to sell her mother's home.

In addition to his work with the elderly, Chris has represented a number of people and organizations in need of legal assistance. He represented the family of a child with autism and other special needs in a dispute with his school system over appropriate education, has represented various nonprofit youth organizations, and has assisted with election protection.

Chris will donate his honorarium to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Katten has a long-term commitment to helping the poor, the powerless and the disenfranchised obtain first-rate representation without charge. Attorneys and other legal professionals give their time, resources and talent to serve individuals and organizations in need, to engage in important national litigation, and to partner with local legal service providers to ensure access to the justice system. Our *pro bono* program includes litigation, both on behalf of individuals and groups, in matters of housing and public accommodations discrimination, civil liberties, immigration, criminal defense, prisoners' rights and consumer matters. We also perform transactional work in such areas as corporate and tax assistance for nonprofit organizations, intellectual property law, employee benefits and international trade law.

Founded in 1974, Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP is a full-service law firm with more than 600 attorneys in locations across the United States and an affiliate in London. The firm's business-savvy professionals provide clients in numerous industries with sophisticated, high-value legal services, with a focus on corporate, financial services, litigation, real estate, commercial finance, intellectual property and trusts and estates. Among our clients are a wide range of public and private companies, including a third of the Fortune 100, as well as a number of government and nonprofit organizations and individuals. For additional information, visit www.kattenlaw.com.