

Dean William Treanor and the faculty and staff of Fordham University School of Law are honored to see the work of our Public Interest Resource Center (PIRC) recognized with the ABA's Pro Bono Publico Award.

Fordham Law School's motto is "In the service of others." This award reminds us it is more than a motto, it is a challenge we strive to meet every day. Fordham Law has, for more than 100 years, challenged the full potential of our students' minds and hearts to master the law and the craft of lawyering for purposes beyond their own ends. Our students are taught to recognize that extraordinary skills and talents come with an obligation to serve. These principles echo the legal profession's tradition of *pro bono publico* and they are demonstrated through PIRC's work.

PIRC was created in 1992 by a few motivated public interest students including Dean John Feerick, now Norris Chair of Law to Public Service, and Assistant Dean for Public Interest Tom Schoenherr, then Associate Director of Career Planning. These founders recognized the great need for *pro bono* legal services among the disadvantaged. They shared a vision of how law students could help meet that need. PIRC was founded on the premise that students come to a highly selective law school with passion, skills, and energy, and that each can make a difference.

PIRC began with one full-time staff member and three active student *pro bono* organizations. Today, it is home to 20 dynamic student-initiated and run projects. PIRC is involved in advocacy, legal assistance, and education on issues including domestic violence, consumer rights, unemployment, housing, immigration, environmental advocacy, the post-Katrina Gulf Coast, prisoner's rights, and children's rights.

PIRC organized and fostered Fordham Law's commitment to public service. That commitment has grown beyond PIRC and today exhibits itself in a variety of unique programs. Fordham Law is home to The Leitner Center for International Law and Justice, which sponsors the annual Crowley international human rights fact-finding mission. Our Feerick Center for Social Justice and Dispute Resolution addresses difficult urban social issues. Fordham Law's renowned legal clinic houses 13 programs that assist those in need.

Each year, nearly 500 students serve the public through PIRC. Thousands of PIRC alumni perform *pro bono* work. These attorneys are found across forty-eight states and in forty-one countries. They credit their initial exposure to *pro bono* in law school as the root of their continuing interest.

Fordham Law's class of 2008 contributed 101,700 hours of service through student organizations, internships, externships, clinics, and independent projects. PIRC students have contributed 706,065 hours of *pro bono* services since 1998. In 2006, Fordham Law's centennial year, Dean Treanor challenged our community to contribute an unprecedented 100,000 hours of *pro bono* work. PIRC helped organize the initiative and the Fordham family responded with 117,500 hours in those 12 months. The effort

included alumni from every graduating class since 1956, 260 students, 54 faculty, and 11 administrators.

This kind of work does more than help people in need. Fordham Law is committed to educating the complete attorney. Through *pro bono* efforts, our students learn to work with clients, the courts, and with other attorneys. They draft agreements and they learn to listen and negotiate. In short, they learn the craft of lawyering.

The challenge of *pro bono* obligations can be overwhelming. Lawyers are busy and the best intentions can be lost in the crush of business and the call of family. The Fordham philosophy is to instill this commitment early in the hope that it becomes second nature. Performing *pro bono* work while meeting the school's challenging academic requirements prepares students for the real world. Our students learn to find time among class schedules, moot court competitions, and journal responsibilities to serve. PIRC provides the infrastructure that helps nurture a continuing spirit of service.

We appreciate the ABA's work to promote public service. We are honored to be in a position where we can draw attention to those efforts.

We would like to thank all of the full-time public interest attorneys who supervise and mentor our students every year. Their dedication is inspiring, their work vital. And finally, to our student volunteers, this award truly belongs to you. We ask you to inspire others as you have been inspired.