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Mayer Brown, BNY Mellon Honored For Pro Bono Work

By **Andrea Keckley**

Law360 (April 4, 2023, 2:09 PM EDT) -- The New York City Bar Association's City Bar Justice Center is awarding BNY Mellon and Mayer Brown LLP the 2023 City Bar Justice Award on Tuesday for promoting justice through their pro bono and philanthropic work.

The Bank of New York Mellon Corp. and Mayer Brown have long worked with the City Bar Justice Center. City Bar Fund Chair Carol Villegas will present the award to BNY Mellon general counsel Kevin McCarthy and Mayer Brown New York office Managing Partner Matthew Ingber during the center's annual gala.

Mayer Brown

Mayer Brown was the first major law firm to develop and implement a strategic pro bono plan, according to the City Bar Justice Center. Ingber told Law360 Pulse that pro bono was part of the firm's DNA.

"There's always been an expectation and a philosophy that we are all very fortunate to have the jobs that we have, we have a skill set where we can help other people," he said, "and we have an obligation as members of this profession to serve the underserved, to help those who are in need of representation, to advance causes of social justice and racial justice and inclusiveness."

Mayer Brown launched the racial justice-focused Project Equity in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Through that project, the firm pledged to spend 50,000 hours through 2023 fighting systemic racism and promoting racial equity.

As part of Project Equity, the law firm worked with the City Bar Justice Center Homeowner Stability Project, which represents low- to moderate-income homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes through practices such as mortgage foreclosure and payment arrears. The firm has also worked with Communitas America, which helps entrepreneurs in underresourced areas.

Associates at Mayer Brown are required to complete 60 hours of pro bono work in their first year at the firm. "What we found is that the more our people engage in pro bono efforts, the more pro bono work they want to do," Ingber said.

The firm's pro bono program is managed by Marcia Maack. Maack sits on the committee of the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice and the board of directors of the Washington Council of Lawyers.

The people who help run Mayer Brown's pro bono program have connections among public interest advocates, Ingber said. "They have their finger on the pulse of the type of work that our lawyers are interested in doing," he said. "And they are just a hugely valuable asset in making connections between our lawyers and the individuals or the public interest organizations who are in need of our help."

Ingber noted that Mayer Brown had a sizable pro bono asylum practice as well. For instance, Chicago-based pro bono adviser Marc Kadish worked with AT&T Inc. in-house lawyer Mark Ortlieb to represent a transgender man from Mexico who was granted asylum in May 2021.

"Many of our associates and partners have jumped into very significant asylum-related cases," Ingber said. "It could be matters that are challenging government policies to the extent they're impacting immigration rights in a way that we think is unjust or unfair. It could be representing an individual or a family who are seeking asylum in the United States because they have a credible fear of persecution in their home country."

BNY Mellon

BNY Mellon employees logged more than 1,800 volunteer hours through its pro bono program in 2022, according to the City Bar Justice Center. The company says it made \$8.5 million in employee contributions and matching donations in 2020. Employees volunteered a total of 54,000 hours that year, with 34% of those hours focused on pro bono and skills-based projects.

"BNY Mellon's philanthropic and pro bono work is central to who we are as a company and that extends to the legal department," McCarthy told Law360 Pulse.

In November 2020, BNY Mellon announced a \$20 million multiyear commitment to support educational and workforce development programming. The company committed \$10 million to the City University of New York system and \$5 million to the Community College of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh. It also invested \$5 million in workforce training with various local and national organizations.

"Funding scholarships for first-generation students at impressive institutions like the City University of New York and Historically Black Colleges and Universities can have a life-changing impact on young people and their families," McCarthy said. "Today, our philanthropic strategy is building the workforce of the future, equipping young people from underserved communities with the skills and education needed to excel in careers in business, technology and STEM."

BNY Mellon has also worked to help people enter the workforce through its Year Up program, which seeks to help young adults with their career and higher education. The company says it has served more than 40,000 students, with graduates earning an average starting salary of \$52,000.

BNY Mellon's also worked to support global health infrastructure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. McCarthy said that in 2020 the company facilitated nearly \$6 million in funding for worldwide COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts and double-matched employee donations to this cause.

McCarthy said the bank's leaders "strongly encourage" legal department employees to commit at least 12 hours a year to community-focused work.

"To support this, BNY Mellon has a robust employee giving and volunteer program with a variety of benefits, like company matching for employees' donations to the charities of their choice and three days

of paid volunteer time," he said. "All told, we've provided about \$5 million in consulting services to nonprofits and individuals in need over the last five years."

--Editing by Karin Roberts.

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