

## Mayer Brown's NY Staff Helps Mentor Teens, Young Adults

By **Andrea Keckley**

*Law360 (May 26, 2023, 3:43 PM EDT)* -- Mayer Brown's New York staff is close to wrapping up its second annual mentorship program, where it pairs an attorney and a non-attorney staff member with a young person to offer career guidance as part of its partnership with Children's Village.

The six-week program matches Mayer Brown employees with people in their late teens and early 20s who are receiving services through Children's Village or one of its partnering organizations.

Mayer Brown counsel Marcella Barganz, who developed the program, told Law360 Pulse on Thursday they just completed their fourth weekly session on Wednesday.

"The mentees arrive, and they're shy and maybe a little intimidated," she said. "And by week three or four, it's full power, energy and excitement."

Children's Village serves teens and young adults who have been caught up in the criminal justice system or separated from family either through the child welfare system or due to migrating to the U.S.

Founded in 1851, the organization has partnered with Mayer Brown for more than 10 years, including when the firm came to its aid after a national bank with which Children's Village had a nearly three-decade relationship pulled out of New York.

"Marcella and Mayer Brown stepped in and helped us with a transaction that, without their help, would have been impossible and cost-prohibitive," Jeremy Kohomban, the president and CEO of Children's Village, told Law360 Pulse on Tuesday.

"It probably saved us, I'd say something between [\$300,000] and half a million dollars in pro bono work that allowed us to find a new bank and successfully transition a number of credit lines and construction loans and tax credit programs that were just absolutely essential for our day-to-day work," Kohomban added.

Barganz said the 2018 matter was a catalyst for future partnerships with the firm.



Mayer Brown's New York staff helps mentor teens and young adults through its partnership with Children's Village. (Courtesy of Mayer Brown)

"With that experience under our hats, we then wanted to pursue other ideas and other ways we could collaborate once that deal closed," she said. "And so we started brainstorming and trying to think of creative ways that we could really have a meaningful impact on the community that the organization was servicing."

The mentoring program was developed over the fall and winter of 2020 and launched for the first time last year. Each young person is matched with a team of one attorney and one business services staff member. They meet once a week for about an hour.

"The [conversation] topics range," Barganz said. "They cover everything from job readiness, how to apply for a job, interview role-playing, workplace etiquette, social media guidelines when you're on the job, tips and tricks for success, and then also to explore what situations both the mentors and the mentees have experienced on the job that are uncomfortable or that could be reviewed."

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

"Mayer Brown has done an amazing job of finding the right fit so that our young people feel comfortable and are also comfortable asking questions and asking for help, which is the secret sauce to learning at that age," Kohomban said. "You want to have people that you're comfortable with and you're comfortable asking questions and seeking help."

--Editing by Philip Shea.