

Chicago Pro Bono Luncheon T



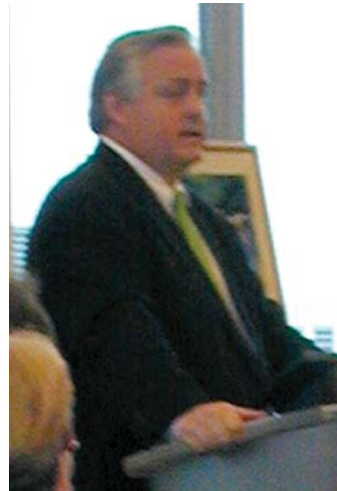
Richard Williamson, Marc Kadish, Jane Williamson

The Annual Chicago Pro Bono Luncheon held on October 19, 2006, demonstrated the broad international focus of Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw's pro bono efforts. The day centered on two individuals who are both working on issues that cross national borders: Chicago Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year award recipient Richard Williamson and keynote speaker Vikram Akula.

"I was glad to see the firm recognizing the value of doing international pro bono work and human rights work and I hope we can continue to grow on that and lend assistance in parts of the world that really need it," said Williamson, a Chicago-based partner who

was honored for several international endeavors of the sort that he has frequently undertaken during the course of his distinguished career. The body of work for which he was recognized included a nine-month assignment on the seven-person Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). He also led an international observer mission to Afghanistan's presidential election in 2004, and participated as an international election observer to the first-ever free elections in Liberia in 2005.

The OSCE work was aimed at revitalizing the organiza-



Richard Williamson

tion and strengthening its long-term effectiveness as a body that promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Reforms to the organization are now under way based on the panel's report, which was delivered in June 2005. Encompassing 56 European, Central Asian and North American states, the Vienna-based OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization. Williamson received his appointment to the panel based on his numerous contributions to foreign service, including posts as the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State,

Ambassador to the U.N. Offices in Vienna, Ambassador and U.S. Representative to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and Ambassador and Alternative Representative to the U.N. for Special Political Affairs.

"It was nice that so many organizations for whom the firm does pro bono [work] were able to be there," Williamson said in reference to the award luncheon. "It's an excellent event that gives an opportunity for lawyers at Mayer Brown who do pro bono work to spend time with some of the clients they do work for and meet others that the firm works with."

A highlight of the luncheon was the keynote address by Vikram Akula, who was named one of *Time* Magazine's 2006 People of the Year for his efforts aiding poor women in India through his organization, SKS Microfinance. Akula founded SKS a decade ago to create a large-scale organization to

The firm's 2005–2006 Pro Bono lawyers

| Rex A. Palmer | James A. Parker | Susan R. Proffitt

Lorenzini | Andrew S. Marovitz | David R. Melton

NORTHSIDE COLLEGE PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL

CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING Kesner B

7TH CIRCUIT COURT PROJECT Jeffrey A. Berger

Demetrios G. Metropoulos | Christopher Monsour | La

Jeffrey A. Berger | Michael E. Brogan | Vazantha R. Meyers

akes on an International Flavor



Vikram Akula

provide micro-loans (averaging US\$116) to a population that historically has had no choice but to turn to predatory lenders that charge exorbitant interest. In 2005, Akula met pro bono director Marc Kadish at a conference on non-profit enterprises. This meeting marked the beginning of a fruitful relationship that has seen SKS continue its rapid growth rate with the assistance of Chicago partners David Carpenter and Ashish Prasad, acting as U.S. pro bono counsel, and associate

Paul Breloff, a former Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) Fellow, who completed his fellowship with SKS in India.

Akula's keynote address presented a history of SKS and the microfinance industry, and emphasized that for all the good these organizations have accomplished, the global population of three billion people who could benefit from the assistance of microfinance support continues to be severely underserved, with fewer than one in six having ac-

cess to the service. At the root of the problem are the intertwined challenges posed by capacity and capital—most microfinance providers serve fewer than 10,000 loans while operating at a loss, suggesting that larger, technology-enabled, for-profit organizations like SKS are the future of this industry.

"It has been a great pleasure to work with the Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw team. They have provided tremendous valuable input at a time when we really needed it," Akula recently commented. "The firm's legal guidance gave us the platform to raise equity of \$15 million over the last two rounds, which we then leveraged 10 times to get \$150 million in loans for the unbanked poor in India."

"In particular, Dave Carpenter helped us navigate legal issues which were beyond our expertise," he added. "This has helped us in retain-



Paul Breloff

ing the social dimension of our work, where our borrowers hold a majority stake in the company and are benefited not only as recipients of microfinance but also as shareholders."

"Working on behalf of an organization like SKS is a pleasure," commented Carpenter. "They provide a phenomenal service that improves the lives of everyone with whom they work."

The luncheon also honored the firm's 32 lawyers who participated in recent pro bono projects with the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Seventh Circuit Project and Northside College Preparatory High School.

envenu | Katherine Deibert | Stephanie Roark | Jamie L. Romick | Maria G. Sakamoto | Clayton P. Stanfield
| Matthew B. Burke | Robert M. Dow, Jr. | Georgina Fabian | David W. Fuller | Marian C. Haney | Agostino
uren R. Noll | Jeffrey W. Sarles | Sean T. Scott | Matthew C. Sostrin | Veronica L. Spicer | Reiko E. Suber
| Sean T. Scott | Michael T. Sullivan | Tamela M. Woods