

center news

Issue 64 :: Fall/Winter Edition (August- December 2015) :: www.brownrudnickcenter.com

Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts of Massachusetts and Brown Rudnick Hold Annual Holiday Card Contest for Boston Public School Students

It was almost time to start the annual celebration of the Brown Rudnick - Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA) Holiday Art Contest. Behind the closed doors of the Brown Rudnick Events Center, food was being laid out, awards to be handed out were being placed next to the podium, the Power Point presentation with pictures of the student art work was being rehearsed. Outside the doors, a crowd grew. Scores of Boston Public School student artists, their parents and siblings, some of their art teachers, Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation Board members and Brown Rudnick attorneys and staff eagerly waited for the popular event to begin.



But seven year old Shiyao Gao knew his art work had been selected to grace the 2015 Holiday Card and he could not contain his enthusiasm. He jumped forward, burst through the door and danced into the waiting Event Center with his hands raised over his head in victory crying out; "The overall winner is here! The overall winner is here!"

Brown Rudnick and the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts of Massachusetts ("VLA-MA"), a program of the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston, announced the winners of the annual Holiday Card Contest for Boston Public High School students on December 1, 2015. Created in 2004 to support arts education in Boston Public Schools, the contest has provided an opportunity for educators to engage students in an art enrichment program. The contest was initiated with a grant from The Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation...

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Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation Awards 11 Community Grants in 2015



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Annual Holiday Card Contest for Boston Public School Students

AND THE WINNER IS...

Winners are listed below.

- **First Place Winner**

"A Little Sparrow"

Artist: Zhiyuan Gao, 2nd Grade

School: Tobin K-8

- **High School Winner**

"Untitled"

Artist: Kristofer Girdhari, 12th Grade

School: Henderson High School

- **Middle School Winner**

"Untitled"

Artist: Phylca Robinson, 6th Grade

School: Henderson High School

- **People's Choice Winner**

"Waiting on a Friend"

Artist: Kathleen Canola, 12th Grade

School: East Boston High School

MORE WINNERS PICTURED BELOW

(continued from cover) and with assistance from the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, as well as through the support of the Boston Public Schools. Contestants, their teachers and families gathered to celebrate this year's winners at an awards reception hosted by the contest sponsor, the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation at the law firm of Brown Rudnick LLP. The first-place winner had his artwork made into a holiday card which is used by the Firm and raises funds for the VLA-MA. Every winning student received an award certificate and art supplies.



Contest winners, (Zhiyuan Gao pictured at top left), above with Center Executive Director Al Wallis and Jim Grace, Executive Director of the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston, Inc.

Foundation Road Trip to Hartford!

At the end of September, Center Executive Director Al Wallis and Center Coordinator Kellie Garrity visited two Hartford Relationship Grant Recipients: *Hartford Public Library and the Mark Twain House/Capital Prep Program.*



Hartford Public Library

The Hartford Public Library is a first-time Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation Relationship Grantee. Grant funds will be used to support the *Leap Into Learning Child Care Program* which provides early literacy training and resources to home daycare centers and educators. The resources and training are provided at the library.

Mark Twain House/Capital Prep Program

The Mark Twain House uses grant funds to support a summer reading and writing program based on “Huck Finn” for 10th graders from Capital Prep Magnet School as part of a six-week summer learning academy at the Mark Twain House Museum in Hartford, CT. Capital Prep Magnet School students made a presentation to Al and Kellie about the summer reading and writing program our grant supports.



London Office Camps with LIFEbeat

The Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation has continued its Relationship Grant to LIFEbeat, a UK charity providing transformational learning experiences for inner-city teenagers.

In Summer 2015, Peter Wozny and Emma Jane Price (Associates from the Brown Rudnick London office) travelled into the English countryside to Stanford Hall (North England) to attend one of the LIFEbeat summer camps for a long weekend.

The summer camps work with young people (aged 14-18) to help them to express their creativity, discover new ideas, be inspired and to learn from others. Most of the young people come from disadvantaged backgrounds with a visible lack of social skills but are able to leave the camps with new self-confidence, communication skills, friends for life and a belief in their own ability to lead and make a difference.

Peter and Emma both engaged with the young people over the weekend and conducted workshops aimed at their future careers by helping to pin point their unique skills set and opening their minds to alternative career paths.

Along with numerous coordination and concentration games, the workshops also explored key debate topics such as equal pay, necessity of higher education and work life balance. The young people came away from the afternoon feeling inspired and positive about their possible future career path and the LIFEbeat staff highly praised Peter and Emma for their contributions.



New Foundation Video!
The latest video from the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest highlights the Foundation's relationship with current Relationship Grantee, New York City Urban Debate League. [Watch the video at www.brownrudnickcenter.com](http://www.brownrudnickcenter.com).

community grant recipients

Throughout the year the **Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation** accepts applications for educational grants to support inner-city educators through its Community Grant Program. Created to support front-line educators who often do not have a voice in funding decisions, the Community Grants pay for small, immediate concrete projects, which will improve inner-city education within the firms cities within the coming year. The grant applications and an explanation of the program can be found [here](#). Catch up with recipients featured in the Spring Edition 2015 [Issue 63](#)



Pictured: Children's Friends of Providence, RI

Supporting Music at Mount Pleasant High School in Providence

The Foundation awarded a Community Grant to Mount Pleasant High School in Providence, RI to help purchase culturally authentic West African and Latin American musical instruments for 75 – 100 students enrolled in the school's Introduction to Music course.

"Many of my students have emigrated from West African and Latin American countries, and this music program will teach them about respecting race and culture, while fostering learning about their past and the past of their peers. Thanks to the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation, students will learn to play an authentic instrument to help them understand how the music relates to the history of the culture, country and people that are being studied."

-Danielle Lucini, Mount Pleasant High School Music Teacher and Grant applicant



Foundation Grant Supports Literacy Program at Boston Collegiate Charter School

The Foundation awarded a Community Grant to the Boston Collegiate Charter School in Dorchester, MA to purchase e-readers for the school's newly renovated library.

"As a teacher who instructs one hundred 6th graders each year, I see how the absence of e-readers hurts our struggling readers. Many read well, but most do not; in fact, many read far below grade level. Our school's mission is to prepare each student for college. But if a child can't read well by the 6th grade, the chances of that child graduating high school plummet with each successive year. We are grateful for the Foundation's support to help us fill this gap."

-Paul Sipes, 6th Grade Reading Teacher, Lower School Librarian and Grant Applicant.



Accepting Applications for Community Grants

Each month the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation accepts applications for educational grants to support inner-city educators through its *Community Grant* Program. Created to support front-line educators who often do not have a voice in funding decisions, the *Community Grants* subsidize small, concrete projects, which will improve inner-city education within Boston, Hartford, London, Providence, New York, Washington, DC, or Orange County, California within the coming year. The grant applications and an explanation of the program can be found by clicking [HERE](#).

community grant recipients



Preparing for College

Volunteer Coaches for the Century High School Mock Trail Team in Santa Ana, California including Brown Rudnick volunteers, are leading the way for students in 2016 to compete at the highest level of competition instilling confidence and higher learning through the use of grant provided Chromebook(s). College preparatory classes and other events are scheduled for the upcoming semester to support the students success at Century High School.

Pictured from left: Principal, Michael Parra of Century High School Santa Ana, CA and Brown Rudnick Associate Arjun Sivakumar.



Keeping 8th Grade Students in School and On Track to Graduate

The Foundation awarded a Community Grant to the John W. McCormack Middle School in Dorchester, MA to support the school's efforts to reduce drop-out rates among 8th grade students. Grant dollars will help fund a variety of educational incentives, from movie tickets to college visits, which reward strong performance and motivate students to improve their attendance, behavior and grades.

"We believe that using incentives to support the development of strong habits is an important first step in reducing the dropout crisis, and ensuring that our students know the key factors that they need to address in their own school performance in order to be successful. As part of the school's Early Warning Indicators (EWI) incentives initiative, we piloted an incentive programs during the 2014-2015 school year. This program successfully increased student attendance and grades, and we anticipate that we can have the same impact this year."

-Neema Avashia, 8th Grade Civics Teacher and Grant Applicant



Using Soccer as a Learning Tool

Brooklyn Arbor has implemented a soccer class in Spanish once a week for three classrooms that serve 75 English Language Students in first through third grade. In the picture, students huddle with the coach, where they discuss strategies for working through their conflicts and being a good team.

"I can't say enough about what the soccer class has done for our students. They come out of soccer calm, and ready to learn. They feel they have a mentor, a caring friend and role model in Coach Ivan. And they are learning to work together and respect each other."

-Emily Pryor, 1st Grade Teacher and Grant Applicant

Forest



Elementary

Facilitating English Language Learning Tools for Students in New York

PS71 Forest Elementary School in the Ridgewood neighborhood of New York City received a community grant to support the purchase of mini iPads for use in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The iPads will be used to facilitate learning the English language through phonemic awareness, letter sounds, vocabulary, fluency, intonation, common interest, comprehension, and linguistics.

Nancy Wagner, PS71 teacher and grant applicant said, *"I teach content area subjects to 365 students through technology in a computer lab setting. My students range from Kindergarten through 5th grade, many of whom are first year English language learners. I fully believe in supporting the English language learners through multiple entry points and using advanced technology to break through the barrier of learning the English language. Hands-on, interactive activities using universally recognizable technology devices facilitate this goal. We are grateful for the support of the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation."*

Calling All Grant Recipients! Send Us Your Photos!



There's nothing better than seeing how our Relationship Grants and Community Grants are helping educators and nonprofit organizations improve inner-city education and create positive social change. We want to celebrate and share your successes. Send us your digital photos highlighting how a Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation grant has been put into action by your organization. Your photo may appear in our upcoming newsletter, 2016 calendar or other Center report.

To participate, send your best quality digital photo (with proper photo credit and a brief caption) to Elizabeth McGeoy at EMcGeoy@brownrudnick.com.

(By submitting your photo you certify that you have the right to submit the photos, including authorization for the photos use from anyone appearing in the photo and that you authorize the center's use.)

AWARDS

Community Servings Present the 2015 Lifesaver Award to Ed Hershfield, Carl Axelrod, Philip Schneider and Brown Rudnick

Since 1995, Brown Rudnick has provide pro bono representation to Community Servings, a renowned Boston organization, cooks and delivers healthy meals to those unable to leave their homes due to serious illness (such as AIDS). The firm's work has been primarily in the area of real estate and labor negotiations, with 81 timekeepers devoting 2200 hours (valued at over \$1 million.) In recognition of the firm's outstanding support, at Community Serving's 25th anniversary party, the non-profit awarded its **2015 Lifesaver Award** to the Firm along with Brown Rudnick Partner Edward Hershfield and retired Partners Carl Axelrod and Philip Schneider.

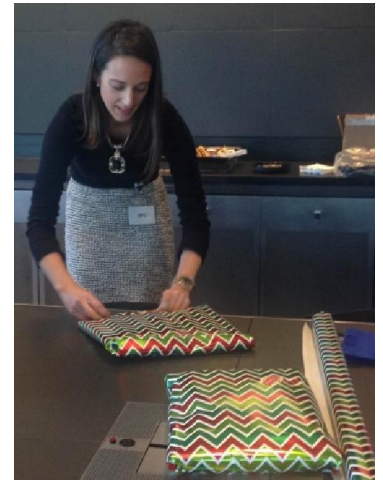


Photo taken by Patrick Whittemore; BostonHerald.com



Annual DCF Holiday Gift Drive

Each year, several Brown Rudnick Offices reach out to children and those in need during the holiday season. Brown Rudnick's Boston Office holds an annual holiday gift drive, coordinated by the Center for the Public Interest and in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF provides a holiday gift "wish list" from children in their custody and individuals at Brown Rudnick "adopt" a specific child by purchasing gifts for their child, to be delivered by DCF for the holiday season. This holiday season, Brown Rudnick purchased and wrapped gifts for 47 children. Thank you to everyone who participated by buying gifts, wrapping presents and loading the DCF truck!



Thompson Island 4K Trail Run Fundraiser

At the end of September, a Boston Brown Rudnick Team, led by the firm's IT Director Keith Schultz, participated in the Thompson Island fundraising 4K Trail Run. Thompson Island receives a Relationship Grant from the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation to support the Connections Program. Connections allows thousands of Boston middle school students to visit Thompson Island and to participate in academic achievement and character building programming.

In the "Overall" team category, Brown Rudnick Running team took 9th out of 58 teams, and in the "Co-ed" team category, Brown Rudnick placed 21st out of 50. Congratulations to all the runners!

Pictured: Gordon Penman, Kiersten Taylor, Andrew Oliver, Tia Wallach, Mark O'Leary, Shari Dwoskin, Daniel Riley, Keith Schultz, Matt White, Brendan Reaney, Joe Alexander Ryan.



Firm-Wide Breast Cancer Fundraiser

In October, all Brown Rudnick offices participated in the annual Lee National Denim Day, in which charitable donations were accepted in exchange for a "jeans day." This year, the effort, which was coordinated by the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest, raised over \$1,220. Proceeds will support Breast Cancer Research. A special thanks to Denise Kaer, Diana Nelson, Val Jones, Claudia Teitelbaum, Judy Downey, Jessica Pels, Amy Bull, Kat Belvin and Kellie Garrity for helping coordinate.



Representing Bridge Over Troubled Waters in Lease Dispute



In October 2015, Brown Rudnick through the firm's Center for the Public Interest, began pro bono legal counsel representation to Bridge Over Troubled Waters ("Bridge"), a Boston nonprofit that provides shelter and care for troubled and homeless teenagers. Led by Brown Rudnick Litigation Partner, Wayne Dennison, and Tom Phillips, Chair of the firm's Real Estate Practice Group, the Brown Rudnick pro bono legal team represented Bridge in a lawsuit against Argo Tea Inc. for refusing to pay rent owed under a lease agreement after abandoning plans to open a cafe and retail store in space owned by the nonprofit.

In the lawsuit, Bridge Over Troubled Waters claims that Argo unlawfully backed out of a 10-year lease agreement with the nonprofit. Because Bridge Over Troubled Waters relies on revenue from renting out space it owns near Boston Common to fulfill its mission, its ability to aid homeless and at-risk youth this winter is endangered by the breach of contract. Under the terms of the lease, the suit alleges, Argo was required to obtain needed permits for its store. The lawsuit claims Argo made no effort to obtain permits and abandoned its plans to open the cafe without informing Bridge. The nonprofit is seeking \$1.5 million in damages. Brown Rudnick also has recently staffed a legal clinic for the homeless at the Bridge, assisting several clients.

Brown Rudnick Recognized for Two Decades of Pro Bono Work

The national Pro Bono Institute (PBI) recently presented an award to Brown Rudnick in honor of its two decades of participation as a signatory to the national Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge© administered by PBI. The Firm pledges to use its best efforts to provide substantial and significant pro bono (free) representation to advance access to justice especially for the poor and for organizations who work on their behalf. The Firm's pro bono program is directed by the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest.



A Successful Transactional Engagement Helping the Homeless

A Brown Rudnick pro bono client, who was seeking to serve homeless children and families, had run into complicated legal issues which threatened to derail all of their good efforts. Through the Boston Bar Association's Lawyers Clearinghouse, they were referred to Brown Rudnick. The pro bono Brown Rudnick team of **Steve Levine, Caitlin O'Malley, and Mary Ambacher** "generated an amazing result" according to the Clearinghouse. The client wrote to Clearinghouse:

"I am writing to you to thank you for your help in getting us hooked up with pro-bono legal services. For six months we have been working with Steven Levine and his team at Brown Rudnick. With their help we have officially re-organized as new non-profit organization.

.... We a new mission which, although similar to our last, includes serving homeless children and their families on the north shore. ... Our shared vision is to house 5-7 homeless families currently living in motels. Along with clinical treatment we will provide them with life skills, education and the support of a caring community of volunteers.

We are in the process of buying a new house. We have received the green light from the Department of Housing to receive expansion money and our support is growing day by day.

Your help has been invaluable. We have made it possible for us to begin again in order to accomplish our mission.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart."



Steve Levine



Mary Ambacher



Caitlin O'Malley

A Heartfelt Send Off for Kellie Garrity



Some four years ago, still adjusting to the departure of the Center's great & defining first full time assistant, Kym Patrico, I was beginning to despair at finding the right "replacement". The position had been refashioned as the *Coordinator for the Center for the Public Interest*, a title encompassing a broader range of responsibilities in the operations, steering and advancement of the Center. We had several good candidates with the right skill set and experience, but seemed lacking the one with the right outlook and temperament. And here I was, with the last of the second-round interviewees sitting in my office. I was already impressed with her intelligence, her poise, her relevant professional experience so early in her career. But "fit"? Not sure. I threw out a random question: What did you do the last time you took a vacation?

"I went to Romania for the summer."

"Why Romania?"

"I wanted to work with children in an orphanage where there was a real need."

I had found the Center Coordinator.

In the four years that followed, my high and demanding expectations were always exceeded. Kellie started very competent and ever-excelled from there. She took an ownership interest in the Center, had an intuitive sense for how to make it work and an incredible knack for keeping things -- including me -- organized, focused and moving forward. Her four years in the job were an adventure of public service events, grantee visits, visits to homeless shelters, work-arounds for insolvable problems and long conversations about what was important about what we were doing and how we should define and achieve success. Along the way, as she and the Center evolved, the fit only got better.

One of the true joys in working with Kellie was her genuineness -- her innate empathy in relating to anyone. But her special connection with and passion for children was clear from the start and only strengthened during her work with the Center. While working full time (and planning her wedding!), she went back to college in the evenings to get her teaching degree. And so, it was the natural evolution that she was destined to launch from the Center into the teaching profession when the opportunity in that field arose. Unexpectedly, a good opportunity did arise. And so, as we both knew that she should, Kellie seized the opportunity moved on. The Center and I, personally, benefited so much from Kellie's presence. Her departure is bittersweet for so many associated with the Center and the Foundation, both inside and outside the Firm. Sincerely and simultaneously we wish her the very best and we miss her.

New to the Brown Rudnick Team

We are pleased to announce that Elizabeth McGeoy is the new Coordinator for the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest.

Liz joins us from the non-profit sector where she spent the last several years as a Development Manager and Logistics Specialist honing her skills in event management, development, executive level support and project management.

While with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Liz earned the "Circle of Excellence" Award in 2013 and served as a member of the National Development Staff Conference Committee through 2015.

A graduate of Lasell College in Newton Massachusetts, with a BA in Communication and minor in Event Management, Liz was also a Division III collegiate athlete with a starting position on Lasell Lasers Women's Soccer 2008-2012 with GNACC Championships won in 2010 and 2011. She has also studied and written on immigration and poverty while volunteering with Shoulder to Shoulder, a 13 day "home stay" in Veracruz, Mexico with a Mexican family, involving full days of intensive manual labor building local residences.

Liz's relevant experience, perspective, education and engaging personality are a wonderful addition to the Center's work and world.

Perhaps most immediate and important, we could not have produced this edition of the Center News without Liz at the helm.



Please contact Al Wallis or Elizabeth McGeoy to discuss any matters regarding the Brown Rudnick Center for the Public Interest. Thanks especially to Lisa Murray, Elizabeth McGeoy, and Kate Souza for their assistance with this newsletter. And finally, apologies for any errors or unintentional omissions, which may from time-to-time occur in the Center Quarterly - maybe even this one. - Al Wallis