

This issue of Voices of Excellence focuses on supporting children in need. Barclay Damon partners with numerous organizations that advocate for children’s rights, two of which are highlighted in this issue.

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

“A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.”

– Chinese Proverb

Firm Partners: Supporting Child Victims and Families

Bivona Child Advocacy

On July 10, 2023, [Bridget Martin](#), the development manager at [Bivona Child Advocacy Center](#), gave a presentation on the organization to Barclay Damon. Barclay Damon has partnered with Bivona on many projects in the past, including an annual Holiday Lights Tour fundraiser. Bivona is a valuable resource right in our backyard, providing necessary services to victims of child abuse and their families in Monroe County and the surrounding counties. In addition, the center teaches prevention education to children and adults alike, reaching over 30,000 children last year alone. Join the conversation, and do your part to keep kids safe.

Angels of Mercy New York



On November 9, 2023, Barclay Damon will host a lunch ‘n’ learn presentation by Lauren VanCott, board member of [Angels of Mercy New York](#), to provide information about human trafficking. Human trafficking is a \$150 billion–a-year

industry, and one-third of all human trafficking takes place in the United States—even in our communities. Angels of Mercy is an anti–human trafficking organization that provides educational programs and resources to schools, churches, women’s groups, medical providers, and others. In particular, Angels of Mercy teaches people how to guard against human trafficking and identify warning signs.

2023 DIVERSITY PARTNER COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Sharon Brown, Chair
New York City



Bob Heary
Buffalo



Jerry Mackey, at Large
Rochester



Naresh Kannan
Albany



Jen Leonardi, Pro Bono at Large
Buffalo



Mitch Katz
Syracuse



Sanjeev Devabhakthuni
Rochester



Penny Mason
Major Markets



Zach Forward
Syracuse

Meet the 2023 Summer Associates¹

ALBANY



Arooj Ghori | 1L

Home City and State:
Buffalo, NY
Law School:
Albany Law School

What has been your favorite law school class so far? Why?
My favorite class in law school so far has been Property. I found land use and zoning to be one of the most interesting topics I’ve studied in school so far.

BUFFALO



Alyssa Carbone | 1L

Home City and State:
New City, NY
Law School:
University at Buffalo School of Law

What was your deciding factor in attending law school?
Being able to make a difference and challenge myself intellectually!



Brenden Diaz | 2L | Land Use & Zoning

Home City and State:
Buffalo, NY
Law School:
University at Buffalo School of Law

What is your favorite thing to do with your free time?
I love talking to people. I’ll talk to anyone, and I can usually find commonalities with complete strangers. I think at the core, human beings are all very similar.



Alec Herbert | 2L | Torts & Products Liability Defense | Professional Liability

Home City and State:
Clifton Park, NY
Law School:
University at Buffalo School of Law

What has been your favorite law school class so far? Why?
Constitutional Law and related classes that touch on our society’s history.

¹ One summer associate opted out of being included in this publication.

BUFFALO



Madeline Stoklosa | 2L | Commercial Litigation | Labor & Employment

Home City and State:
West Seneca, NY

Law School:
University at Buffalo School of Law

What was your deciding factor in attending law school?
Witnessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nursing homes and their struggle to implement related policies.

NEW HAVEN



Joshua Maddox | 1L

Home City and State:
New York, NY

Law School:
University of Connecticut School of Law

What was your deciding factor in attending law school?
I wanted to be able to act on the issues that I and others face, and being a lawyer gives me the greatest platform to achieve that.



Joslin Valiyaveettill | 2L | Corporate

Home City and State:
North Haven, CT

Law School:
University of Connecticut School of Law

What has been your favorite law school class so far? Why?
International Taxation. It was interesting to learn about how different countries interact with each other, and many of the topics were taught by guest lecturers who used real matters they worked on as examples.

ROCHESTER



Cecilia Faringer-Perez | 1L

Home City and State:
Westchester, NY

Law School:
Georgetown University Law Center

What has been your favorite law school class so far? Why?
Critical Race Theory. It has helped me become a more critical reader and has provided me with a cross-disciplinary analytical framework.



Farisa Khan | 2L | Health Care Controversies | Torts & Products Liability Defense

Home City and State:
Chicago, IL

Law School:
Loyola University Chicago School of Law

What has been your favorite law school class so far? Why?
Health Law Business and Finance. I learned a lot about health law for the first time, and the instructor did a fantastic job explaining the material.

SYRACUSE



Nosa Aimuyo | 2L | Corporate

Home City and State:
Carrollton, TX

Law School:
Emory University School of Law

What is your favorite thing to do with your free time?
I almost always have a podcast playing in the car or while cooking or cleaning. Ezra Klein, Chris Hayes, and Vox Media are my go-to podcasts.

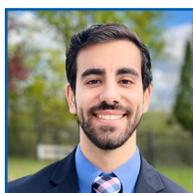


Cameron Bishop | 2L Commercial Litigation | Torts & Products Liability Defense

Home City and State:
Scotia, NY

Law School:
Albany Law School

What was your deciding factor in attending law school?
Wanting to help other people and make a positive difference.



Elias Gantos | 1L

Home City and State:
Syracuse, NY

Law School:
Syracuse University College of Law

Do you have other attorneys in your family?
I am the first person in my family to attend professional school.



Amie Mbye | 2L | Intellectual Property

Home City and State:
Augusta, GA

Law School:
Syracuse University College of Law

What is your favorite thing to do in your free time?
I enjoy painting in my free time.



Samantha Rodriguez | 2L | Real Estate

Home City and State:
Easton, PA

Law School:
Northeastern University School of Law

What was your deciding factor in attending law school?
I was fortunate to work with a general counsel in my previous position who was a wonderful mentor. She encouraged me to pursue a career in law. It was her encouragement and my passion for helping people that led me to law school.

Pro Bono Corner

Firm Pro Bono Achievements

Congratulations to [Joe Wilson](#) on being honored with a Pro Bono Excellence Award by the *Daily Record* and *Rochester Business Journal*! Joe has been a leader in pro bono work in Rochester the last few years, including his work with the JustCause Legal Help Center and with several individual clients. In particular, Joe recently spent over 100 hours assisting a 60-year-old low-income client with respect to a denial of his short-term disability benefits. The client's employer denied his disability claim because he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease after he was fired. Joe provided advice and prepared an appeal and was able to negotiate pension benefits without litigation. This award is well-deserved recognition for Joe's great work!

In recognition of their outstanding contribution in performing 50 or more hours of free legal services for low-income individuals in 2022, the New York State Bar Association's Empire State Counsel designation has been given to [Genevieve Halpenny](#), [Payne Horning](#), [David Fulvio](#), [J. J. Pelligra](#), [Cathy Wettlaufer](#), and [Emma Marshall](#).

Firm Updates

Summer Associate PGL Panel and Cocktail Party

In July, we hosted our annual panel discussion with the firm's practice group leaders (PGLs), followed by a cocktail party in honor of this year's summer associates.

During the panel, the PGLs provided insights into their practice areas and individual career paths. The summer associates then had the opportunity to network with attorneys and professionals from offices across the firm's platform at a party at Allison and [John Langan](#)'s home in Cazenovia, New York. Through these informative and fun activities, summer associates were able to gain a better understanding of Barclay Damon's practices and culture.



Lit in Honor and Support

Barclay Damon Tower was majestically lit red, white, and blue for Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11 and purple and teal for Suicide Prevention Month on September 12.



Office Updates

ALBANY

Helping MWBE Clients

[Kyra Ganswith](#), with guidance from [David Burch](#), successfully appealed a determination by the NYS Department of Economic Development, which is overseen by Empire State Development (ESD), denying the client's application for certification as a woman-owned business enterprise. After appeal, Kyra and David worked closely with the company's accountant to understand financial documents and the corporate structure in order to persuade ESD to reverse the denial before the hearing. The certification is important for the client to significantly increase their revenue by providing the ability to reach a broader network of customers and resources. The client was thrilled to receive recertification after a three-year battle. This is Kyra and David's third successful settlement of an MWBE-certification appeal this year.

Affirmative Action's Impact on Diversity Initiatives

An article by [Dena DeFazio](#), "The Supreme Court's Affirmative Action Cases and the Impact on Diversity Initiatives," was published in the summer issue of the New York State Bar Association Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's newsletter *Stride*. Dena is co-chair of the committee.

BUFFALO

Alyssa Carbone Honored

Summer associate [Alyssa Carbone](#) is a recipient of a USLAW NETWORK Law School Diversity Scholarship. The scholarship program is part of the organization's commitment to helping eligible diverse law students achieve their academic and professional dreams.

Tabling for Awareness

[Bill Busler](#) and [Susan Benz](#) participated in a vendor fair at the 2023 Developmental Disability Awareness Day Conference, sponsored by Person Centered Services, in Niagara Falls, New York.

Backpacks for Buffalo Kids

The Buffalo office Diversity Leadership Team sponsored a school supply and backpack collection drive for community youth to support the Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo annual school supply drive, 2 Pack a Backpack. This year, the organization distributed school supplies to approximately 4,000 school-aged children in and around Buffalo. The drive was coordinated by [Meghan Dwyer](#), who was interviewed on WGRZ about Barclay Damon's participation.



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Office Updates

NEW YORK

Out and Proud

[Janice Grubin](#) was interviewed by Law360 Pulse, and the article, “LGBT Bar of NY Vice President Talks Pride and Backlash,” was featured as the lead story in their New York Pulse newsletter. See our News-page item about Janice’s interview [here](#), including a link to the full article for Law360 Pulse subscribers.

Sharon Brown Honored

[Sharon Brown](#) has become a fellow of the American Bar Foundation following her nomination to the group by peers. Sharon’s inclusion makes her part of a global honorary society of attorneys, judges, law faculty, and legal scholars who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the profession and service to society. Membership is limited to 1 percent of US attorneys. In addition, Sharon was appointed to the executive board of the New York State Bar Association’s Women in Law Section and serves as the co-chair of the Committee for Awards and Honors.

ROCHESTER

Community Care in Rochester

The Rochester office sponsored an August school supply drive for Pencils & Paper, a program of Jewish Family Services, that serves the educational and creative needs of children in the Greater Rochester area by providing free supplies to teachers in high-poverty schools. This year, supporting organizations were assigned to collect a specific supply, and Barclay Damon was responsible for Crayola crayons and markers. [Sanjeev Devabhakthuni](#) and [Patrick Burke](#) organized our participation in the drive.



Barclay Damon was a team care sponsor for Jordan Health Foundation’s Patients First Annual Luncheon, held at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. [Ray McCabe](#), [Traci Boris](#), and [Sheila Gaddis](#) were among the Barclay Damon attendees.



The Importance of Diversity in the Insurance Industry

[Sanjeev Devabhakthuni](#) and [Joe Wilson](#) presented at Rochester I-Day, an insurance industry event. The titles of their presentations were “Diversity, Inclusion, and Elimination of Bias in the Insurance Industry” and “Insurance Law: Issues in Unfair Claim Settlement Practices and Litigation.”



SYRACUSE

Doing Good in the Community

Syracuse colleagues hosted PEACE, Inc.’s Big Brothers Big Sisters of America’s Annual Back to School Supplies Giveaway and Field Day, including setting up games for the kids.

The event also featured lunch, Skippy’s ice cream truck, and fun prizes. At the end, the kids in attendance picked out backpacks and were invited to fill them with school supplies. Helping out and in attendance were [Alexis Peckham](#), [Mitch Katz](#), [Payne Horning](#), [Angie Lange](#), [Leah Wolf](#), [Deb Little](#), [Margaret Talt](#), [Alexandra Dimon](#), [Zach Forward](#), [Jon McSherry](#), [Karina Shahine](#), [Lauren Bianchi](#), [Jess Kalahar](#), [Heather Lamendola](#), [Christopher Babiarz](#), [John Sindoni](#), [Kristie King](#), and summer associates [Amie Mbye](#) and [Elias Gantos](#).



Diversity in Mentoring

[Renato Smith](#) is a mentor for the Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator® and participated in its “mentor swarm” activity to meet with the program’s startup cohort members. Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator invests \$100,000 each and mentoring in up to ten companies per year led by Black founders.

Arriba, Arias! Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

[Kayla Arias](#) was invited to participate in a panel during a “Hispanic (and Latino/a/e/x) Heritage Month” celebration sponsored by Arriba, a new committee of the Puerto Rican Bar Association. It was held at the Central New York Philanthropy Center in Syracuse.