

This edition of Voices of Excellence explores the importance of building a diverse mentorship network. It's been amazing to see the work done by our attorneys and staff during COVID-19, and each individual's ability to respond to adversity and challenges stems, at least partially, from past mentorship experience in or outside the workplace. We hope these stories from Albany office attorneys and staff will inspire you as we continue moving forward in this challenging time, and we hope you're reminded of the power of personal connections—which no social-distancing order can eradicate.

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

"A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself."
— Oprah Winfrey

2020 DIVERSITY PARTNER COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Sheila Gaddis, Committee Chair
Rochester



Bob Heary, At Large
Buffalo



Jerry Mackey, At Large
Rochester



Corey Auerbach, Pro Bono At Large
Buffalo



David Cost
Albany



Jen Leonardi
Buffalo



Penny Mason
Major Markets



Zack Forward
Syracuse



Mark Whitford
Rochester

Associate Reflections

Brenda Baddam



"In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn."
—Phil Collins

Mentorship is a gift I never knew I needed, but am so blessed to have received. The past eight months at Barclay Damon have taught me how to connect and develop meaningful career relationships both in and outside the firm. Mentorship has given me the opportunity to acknowledge and articulate my needs as well as the

responsibility of building relationships that meet them. The most important lesson I've learned is that a mentor will be willing to share their wisdom, knowledge, skills, and expertise with you. They understand the problems you face not only in your career, but also in everyday life. They were once in your shoes, so they know the importance of effective mentorship.

On my first day at Barclay Damon, I couldn't find the parking garage. In a panic, I reached out to my would-be mentor, Dena DeFazio. Since that moment of complete obliviousness, there's never been a "dumb question" or a question too minute that she hasn't taken the time to answer. Her door has always been open, and I've never been turned away. What my near-peer experience has taught me is that you should ask as many questions as you can—the more you know, the more you realize how much you have to learn. While giving advice is a big part of mentorship, it's so much more than just words being spoken. It's really two people taking time away from billable work to invest in a mutually beneficial relationship. While my near-peer relationship has allowed me to go to Dena for advice, I get to be an asset to her as well. That's the beauty of near-peer mentoring: the constant learning and sharing of information with a relatable associate.

I'm also so grateful to have found a partner mentor in Sheila Gaddis, a fellow minority woman. Sheila looked to break down barriers and encourage my progress by ensuring I knew my value and that I could be successful at the firm. No goal is too high, no obstacle too big to overcome. Sheila joined every mentoring meeting looking to shift preconceived notions and to encourage me to look at the world differently. While developing a mentoring relationship with a partner may seem intimidating at first, a partner with years of experience can help you see the areas where you can grow.

I implore everyone at Barclay Damon to seek out mentorship relationships and invest in them. Mentorship can help you explore your passions, realize your goals, and expand your network, no matter what role you have in our firm. Having lunch or coffee with someone once a month and exchanging emails or phone calls is a small investment that could result in life-changing experiences.

Additionally, I encourage everyone to act as a mentor to others, whether within the firm or outside of it. As a mentor, you get the fulfilling chance to help others uncover their unique passions and guide them toward actions that will help them grow and succeed.

Staff Reflections

Modi Conteh, GLC

“True leaders understand that leadership is not about them, but about those they serve. It is not about exalting themselves, but about lifting others up.”— Sheri Drew

I believe a mentor is someone who elevates those around them. At Barclay Damon, I’ve been fortunate to build a network of diverse mentors who are helping me take the next step in my career. I’m currently applying to law schools, and, in this pursuit, I’ve met three superb men who’ve been bright guides in my life on this path. Getting into law school is not an easy journey, and I’m constantly reminded that you must excel at the highest level from the moment you step foot on campus.

Of counsel Jerry Weiss is the first person who comes to mind when I think of mentorship. I haven’t met a lot of people who genuinely want me to be a better version of myself or tell me that I’ll be a great man someday. Jerry has taken the time to speak with me in his office, and he has provided advice on how to succeed in law school. Moments like these inspire me to be a great attorney like him.

Associate Kadeem Wolliaaston is another one of my mentors. His passion and drive are incomparable, and it’s a privilege to talk to a man who fully understands the struggles I’ll face in and after law school. I am thankful for the time he has invested to help me make my dream a reality, encouraging me to take chances and apply to Ivy League schools. Kadeem constantly reminds me of my worth, and that’s why I look up to him.

Finally, GLC’s Eric Treece is another mentor of mine. He would literally give you the shirt off his back if you didn’t have one. He exemplifies not only fatherhood, but how to remain hungry but humble in life. He constantly reminds me of how special I am and how life doesn’t give us many opportunities to succeed, so I better take every chance and shine like it was my last. He reminds me to treat every single human being with respect regardless of title or life circumstances, and for that, I respect him even more.

Each of these Barclay Damon mentors has had such an amazing impact on my life, and I’m blessed to have cross paths with each of them. I hope to one day make my mentors as proud as I am of them—starting with graduating top of my law school class!

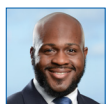
Diversity Mentoring Program Participant Reflections



Naresh Kannan

My quest to enter the legal profession was to find a second career. Although my grandfather was a solicitor in British India, as a child of immigrants, my network was limited and certainly didn’t include any attorney mentors. I also recognized there were not many diverse students at Albany Law School or in the Capital District legal community.

As a 1L, I saw a notice for Barclay Damon’s Diversity 1L Mentoring Program and decided to join. I immediately hit it off with my mentor, partner George Pond, and was impressed by George’s efforts to provide career advice and maintain contact both during the program and after. We discussed family, employment opportunities, and how to be prepared for the next phase of my legal career. Although I worked at a different law firm immediately after law school, George kept in touch and was always there to talk about professional development. When an opportunity presented itself to re-join Barclay Damon, a key factor in my decision to do so was the firm’s dedication to diversity and mentorship, which George himself embodied.



Kadeem Wolliaaston

As a first-generation college graduate and the first in my family to attend law school, it was important to have people within the profession to provide

me with guidance. Albany Law School’s emphasis on building connections with the legal community and Barclay Damon’s commitment to diversity introduced me to the firm’s Diversity 1L Mentoring Program. As my mentor, George Pond took time out of his schedule to listen to my law school experience, provide me with professional development, and give advice about work-life balance. He also introduced me to his colleague and former mentee, Naresh Kannan, who eventually became another mentor of mine. Although the program was only for one semester, we all kept in contact. Those two helped me develop my networking skills and changed my previous perception that older, successful attorneys were too busy to devote time to a law student. Barclay Damon’s commitment to diversity and mentorship played a vital role in where I am today, and I’m thankful.



George Pond

As the father of two adopted daughters who come from diverse backgrounds, I’ve learned that the only thing that really separates people from different backgrounds is the distance between them. I believed that law students from families with little exposure to the practice of law would benefit greatly from developing a friendship with someone who enjoyed working in the legal field, as I did and still do.

So, I was pleased to find Barclay Damon and its dedication

Diversity Mentoring Program Participant Reflections (continued)

to reaching individuals from all types of backgrounds. I participated in the Diversity 1L Mentoring Program because it allowed me to connect with individuals from different backgrounds and experiences. Through this program and our Diversity 1L Summer Associate Program, I was able to make some wonderful new friends like Naresh and Kadeem and help the next generation of diverse attorneys. I've greatly enjoyed seeing several of my former mentees do amazing things in the legal profession and am thankful that Barclay Damon allows me to develop new connections with people who I most likely would not have gotten to know and enjoy without our diversity programs.

Pro Bono Corner

As part of the firm's Pro Bono Program, all full-time attorneys must contribute at least one hour of their time each year, with the annual goal of 100-percent participation and collectively donating time valued at \$1 million.

ALBANY SPOTLIGHT



Brenda Baddam, associate, was appointed by the Northern District of New York to represent pro se defendant Kenton Sherwood, a practicing Rastafarian and inmate at the Bare Hills Correctional Facility. Claims brought forth under the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment stemmed from an incident where Sherwood maintained his religious head covering was forcefully removed by corrections officer Richard Senecal, who alleged the head covering was "tainted." Sherwood spent 38 days without his religious head covering, imposing a substantial burden on his sincere religious beliefs. Although the case was teed up for trial in May, an acceptable settlement agreement was reached with the Attorney General's Office. Brenda received a certificate of appreciation from Judge Brenda Sannes for her work on the case.



Under the supervision of Linda Clark, Health Care Controversies Team leader, Dena DeFazio, associate, has represented a Bedford Hills Correctional Facility inmate serving 25 years to life for second-degree murder since Dena was a summer associate in 2017. Dena submitted an application seeking executive clemency on her client's behalf in December 2018 and routinely provides supplemental information to the Executive Clemency Bureau. After Dena partnered with another attorney and Fordham University law students, her client obtained parole for this summer.

BUFFALO SPOTLIGHT



Ryan Altieri, associate, and Dennis McCoy, partner, represented a property owner in a general negligence action through the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. The case required substantial research regarding the dram shop law, and although extensive depositions were scheduled, they were subsequently adjourned when Ryan supplied the plaintiff's counsel with case law prior to commencing questioning. After receiving the case law, the plaintiff's counsel noted the case "doesn't look good for us" and adjourned the depositions. Ryan and Dennis are now awaiting a stipulation of discontinuance for the client.

Great work, everyone!

New Faces Around the Firm (Through March 31, 2020)

ALBANY

Mary Connolly, *Associate*
Genevieve Trigg, *Special Counsel*

BOSTON

Tyler Coffman, *Legal Office Assistant*

BUFFALO

Andrew Carroll, *Associate*
Richard Gioia, *Of Counsel*
Ari Goldberg, *Associate*

NEW HAVEN

Jacob Buttiker, *Receptionist*
Sherrie Monaco, *Billing Coordinator*

ROCHESTER

Michelle Ciliberto, *Paralegal*
Glenn Pezzulo, *Partner*
Cassandra Rich, *Special Counsel*

SYRACUSE

Stefani Backer, *Receipts Coordinator*
Alexandra Hines, *Business Intake Analyst*
Jon McSherry, *Counsel*

Office Updates

ALBANY

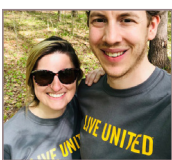
Sponsorships

The Albany office sponsored the Albany Law School Black Law Students Association's annual James Campbell Matthews Banquet in celebration of Black History Month and was a sponsor of the Legal Aid Society for Northeastern New York's Justice for All Campaign for the provision of legal services to vulnerable and low-income individuals.

Albany Law School Speaking Engagements

Brienna Christiano, associate, spoke on a panel providing students with advice on networking and relationship building. David Cost, partner; Naresh Kannan, counsel; and Jennifer Cruz, former 1L and 2L summer associate, served as panelists discussing the firm's Diversity 1L Summer Associate Program. Brenda Baddam, associate, was a panelist during the Albany Law School "Minority Women in Law" event.

Community Day



Albany office attorneys, staff, and their family members went virtual for this year's Community Day, participating in the United Way of the Greater Capital Region's 518 Day to raise money for local COVID-19 relief efforts. Activities included virtual 5ks and fitness classes, trivia, a community-wide baby shower drive, and a sidewalk chalk mural competition. Thanks to everyone who participated, and a special thanks to Alexis Clement, counsel; Mary Connolly, associate; David Cost, partner; Paul Powers, senior business advisor; and Melissa Zambri, co-leader of the Health Care and Health & Human Services Providers Teams, for sending in pictures to share on the firm's social media accounts!

BUFFALO

Jeans Days

The Buffalo and Clarence offices hosted two Jeans Days in January and March to benefit GIRLS Sports Foundation, Inc. and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie, Niagara & the Southern Tier. Both organizations empower young people by creating supportive environments where they can achieve their full potential.

Heart Health Red Carnation Drive

In memory of late partner Larry Oppenheimer, the Buffalo office was particularly active in the firm's Heart Health Red Carnation Drive and National Wear Red Day, with proceeds going to the American Heart Association.

Haven House Adopt-a-Family & Toyland Luncheon

After the Buffalo office donated winter apparel to Haven House for domestic violence survivors and their children during the annual Holiday Drive, Shannon Howley, associate, attended the Haven House Adopt-a-Family & Toyland Luncheon at Child & Family Services in February.

MAJOR MARKETS

Diversity Leadership Team

We're excited to announce our new Major Markets Diversity Leadership Team. Led by Penny Mason, partner, the team represents the Boston, New Haven, and New York offices. Team members include Boston's Carolyn Marcotte Crowley, partner; and Todd Huston, legal secretary; New Haven's Cathy Siegel, legal secretary; and New York's Sharon Brown, partner; Janice Grubin, Restructuring, Bankruptcy & Creditor's Rights Practice Area co-chair; and Natalie Hajinelian, receptionist. We can't wait to see what great ideas they'll bring to our Diversity & Inclusion initiative!



ROCHESTER

Jeans Day

In February, the Rochester office hosted a Jeans Day to benefit the Golisano Children's Hospital Cares for Kids Radiothon. In partnering with Frontier Abstract, \$1,500 was donated and then triple-matched by Tops Markets, bringing the contribution to \$4,500. The money was used to purchase three Angel Eye virtual baby-monitor cameras for parents of NICU babies. Thank you to everyone who donated, and a special thanks to Bailey Sauers, paralegal; Michele Porter, legal secretary; and Kati Negron, GLC site manager, for volunteering at the event.

WOIS Senior Capstone Project

Sanjeev Devabhakthuni, counsel, and Patrick Burke, office manager, volunteered to sit on the morning panel for the World of Inquiry School's Senior Capstone Project, providing feedback on the students' proposals for their own community projects connected to a topic of interest. Barclay Damon is involved in the Capstone Project as it develops throughout the school year, culminating in a final presentation of each project in May.

SYRACUSE

Jeans Day

The Syracuse office hosted a Jeans Day to benefit Through My Eyes, a student organization at HW Smith Pre-K-8 School, to aid them in funding their educational trip to Boston.

Diversity 1L Mentoring Program

In partnership with the Syracuse University College of Law, the Syracuse office continued its third annual Diversity 1L Mentoring Program throughout the spring semester. The program connects firm attorneys with 1Ls from historically underrepresented groups within the legal profession.

Volunteer Lawyers Project

The Syracuse office has volunteered to participate in a program being administered by the Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc. in conjunction with Centerstate CEO to provide legal assistance for small businesses and not-for-profits impacted by COVID-19.