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## Not Only Something Lawyers Do

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While providing pro bono legal services to local organizations and individuals has always been a high priority at Hale and Dorr's Washington office, we have taken the notion of pro bono services to another level in our relationship with Jumpstart DC. In addition to providing legal services, we have formed a true partnership with Jumpstart DC, and in doing so, we have found many ways to support the organization in a manner that involves all members of the firm in a wide variety of activities.

Hale and Dorr's tradition of pro bono service dates back to the founding of the firm; we are perhaps best known for the firm's representation of the U.S. Army in the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings before the Senate Special Subcommittee on Investigations. As a charter signatory to the American Bar Association's Law Firm Pro Bono Project Challenge, we have committed to delivering a consistently high level of pro bono legal services to persons of limited means and to organizations whose primary focus is on meeting the needs of persons of limited means.

One of the primary goals of this effort has been to expand the notion of community giving beyond financial commitment, and to find a way to more effectively involve our lawyers and staff with the community. In talking with lawyers and staff, we noticed a consistent theme, people wanted to get more involved, especially in programs that serve children in the District of

Columbia, but there was no institutional mechanism to identify, direct, and coordinate opportunities for participation.

Building on a program that our Boston office pioneered in 1997, we began an effort to identify one specific organization in the District where our resources could prove most beneficial. After interviewing a number of extremely worthy organizations, we met with Jumpstart DC, a local branch of a nationwide program whose motto is "building school success, family involvement, and future teachers . . . one child at a time." The Jumpstart national early childhood program was launched in 1994 in New Haven, Conn., and today serves six cities nationwide. Jumpstart is a member of the Americorps national service network that engages young people in service to work one-on-one with preschool children who are struggling in Head Start centers. Americorps members (all of them college students) make a two-year time commitment to the program, which provides long-term, individualized attention to 3- and 4-year-olds in the areas most critical for future school success: language/literacy, and social/communication skills. In addition, corps members engage the children's families in the early education of their child and extend literacy into the home. In doing so, the Americorps members receive valuable training as future teachers and community leaders. Jumpstart DC opened in 1998; this year it will serve more than 200 children and families in the District.

## **A Unanimous Decision**

The Hale and Dorr committee (lawyers and staff) that was responsible for evaluating and ultimately selecting the organization with whom to partner was unanimously in favor of Jumpstart, and in March 1998, made the partnership official. The partnership involved not only providing legal services on a pro bono basis, but also a three year financial commitment and

the opportunity for attorneys and staff to work together by contributing their time and talents to Jumpstart.

It has been years since we began our relationship with Jumpstart, and it has been an unqualified success for both our firm and Jumpstart. On the pro bono legal services front, we have been able to assist Jumpstart in looking at lease options for office space in the District and in advising them regarding related real estate issues. In addition, we have assisted the board of advisers for Jumpstart DC on matters relating to the organization, fund raising, and other issues traditionally faced by new nonprofit organizations. As the organization continues to grow to meet the needs of at-risk children across the District, we anticipate that the need for legal services and advice will continue to grow as well, and we remain committed to providing those services on a pro bono basis.

The biggest impact of this relationship, however, has resulted from the opportunities for Hale and Dorr attorneys and staff to participate with corps members in the day-to-day operation of the Jumpstart program. This has taken many different forms.

First, we instituted a program whereby Hale and Dorr employees can assist corps members in the Jumpstart classrooms by volunteering their time during the school day. In the first "trial run" of this program, we had more people volunteer than could be accommodated, and in the time since we started working with Jumpstart, we have consistently had a full pool of volunteers. The feedback from the volunteers has been uniformly positive, and we are at the point where the level of "repeat" volunteers speaks volumes for the quality of the program.

In addition to classroom volunteering, Hale and Dorr employees have

volunteered their time on weekend "service days" when they landscape, clean, and paint Jumpstart facilities across the District. We sponsored a book drive for Jumpstart last fall that was so successful that each Jumpstart child in the program received five books, and almost 50 extra books were distributed to Jumpstart centers. |

Hale and Dorr has also been an active sponsor of "KidsFest;" an annual festival in the Adams Morgan area that features a wide variety of "learning stations," staffed by volunteers (including Hale and Dorr employees), which offer children unique educational experiences and provide families with activities to re-create at home.

The response of Hale and Dorr attorneys and staff alike has been overwhelmingly positive. We have seen almost everyone, from the most senior partner to the most junior staff person, volunteer in the program in one way or another.

In the Hale and Dorr tradition of public service, we have utilized our legal skills to provide much-needed legal services on a pro bono basis to this start-up organization. Further, and perhaps more important, our hands-on participation in the Jumpstart program allows us to experience the tangible benefit of seeing each child progress in his or her development, and we have become more vested in the community and in the future of the District.

At a time when there are more at-risk pre-school children in the District than ever, it is extremely rewarding to participate in Jumpstart's mission: to work toward the day when every child in America enters school prepared to succeed. We feel that our partnership with Jumpstart DC, though relatively young, represents a prime example of how pro bono and community giving programs can be effectively combined to achieve positive results in a

relatively short period of time.

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