

# HIA-LI CEO BRIEF

FEATURING NANCY EBERHARDT, ESQ., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP (PBP)

## Tell us about how you/your company started.

PBP began in 1997 as the brainchild of General Electric attorneys and the Westchester Fairfield Association of Corporate Counsel as a resource for corporate lawyers to find volunteer opportunities where their expertise could benefit local nonprofits. By offering free business legal services to nonprofits in the tri-state area that could not otherwise afford them, PBP provided nearly \$10 million worth of legal services to more than 800 organizations last year alone. PBP empowers nonprofits and strengthens communities by helping client organizations improve effectiveness and avoid risk while keeping limited funds and resources focused on expanding and improving programming for their constituencies.

## What was a turning point for you/your company?

As the nonprofit landscape becomes more complex and organizations become increasingly resource-strapped, requests for legal assistance are at record-level highs. Many people don't realize that nonprofits have similar legal needs as for-profit businesses (i.e. contracts, hiring employees, leasing space), but lack the resources or funds to access that expertise. "The Partnership's expertise and guidance was invaluable and I couldn't have done it without you," said one Long Island client. In a more tangible way, another client recently explained, "... 40 more kids were able to attend our summer camp because of Pro Bono Partnership." In addition to direct legal assistance, PBP provides educational opportunities for nonprofit leaders that help them develop policies, remain compliant, and ultimately build capacity and fulfill their missions.

## What is your philosophy at Pro Bono Partnership?

When nonprofit organizations are legally sound, they are better equipped to serve their communities and their constituencies. Our philosophy is that preventative actions and proper management will allow nonprofits to avoid problems that might otherwise arise when making decisions without legal advice. PBP is dedicated to empowering nonprofits and strengthening neighborhoods in the tristate region by providing free business legal services to nonprofits. Because of PBP's free legal services, nonprofit client organizations can avoid risk and liability, and focus their resources on enhanced programming, more effectively feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, promoting the arts, protecting the environment, and providing essential services in our neighborhoods. PBP has a culture of collaboration, respect and inclusiveness, and provides a positive environment in which to learn, grow, and innovate.

## Tell us about your company's profile today.

For more than 20 years, Pro Bono Partnership's mission has been to provide free legal services to



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nonprofit organizations serving the disadvantaged or enhancing the quality of life in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Our process is highly collaborative, and every client works directly with a staff attorney who helps the nonprofit prioritize its legal needs and access quality legal counsel on a wide range of matters. PBP takes pride in the fact that our staff attorneys focus on nonprofit law, and remain engaged on every project to provide support to volunteer attorneys when needed. Legal matters that we address include corporate governance (by-laws); contracts; mergers and dissolutions; employment issues; incorporation and tax exemption; intel-

lectual property; and real estate.

## What opportunities do you see in the future?

PBP will continue to provide the highest quality legal services to nonprofits on Long Island. We anticipate having opportunities to provide additional educational programs to the nonprofit community. One of our goals is to increase participation by Long Island attorneys/volunteers. Since our founding, PBP has received support from local corporations, and to that end, we hope to build more relationships with the LI business community.