

2013 John Adams and John Quincy Adams
Pro Bono Publico Awards

Short Introduction

Gandhi once said, "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems." We are here today to honor those who have worked tirelessly to make our system of justice accessible to the most vulnerable among us, who have by their example demonstrated what can be accomplished by those who do what they are capable of doing.

Michele Garvin

Michele Garvin is a true pioneer in the world of medical-legal partnerships. The first medical-legal partnership in the country began in Boston at Boston Medical Center two decades ago when doctors recognized that their patients had medical problems, such as those arising from lead paint or mold, that they could not successfully treat unless the underlying conditions were remedied, and that attorneys could help their patients to obtain these remedies.

Michele, a partner in Ropes & Gray's health care practice, helped launch the firm's first medical-legal partnership in 2008 when it adopted the MLP Boston clinic at the Dorchester House Multi-Service Center, also known as "Dot House." For Michele, Dot House became like a second home, and not just because she used to live nearby. From the start, Michele led by example, personally handling and supervising legal matters involving housing, education, public benefits, immigration, family law, and everything in between.

The program was so successful that, two years ago, the Ropes & Gray medical-legal partnership expanded to another location at Dana Farber Cancer Institute where, with the help of three other local law firms, they provided services for low-income cancer patients who previously had no access to pro bono representation.

Through these programs, and because of Michele's leadership, Ropes & Gray attorneys have dedicated tens of thousands of hours to representing hundreds of low-income patients on pro bono medical-legal partnership

projects. While the scope and scale of Michele's legal work with medical-legal partnerships is impressive by itself, she has also taken the extraordinary step of developing training and a cultural competency "curriculum" to educate attorneys about legal and cultural norms in countries like Vietnam, Cape Verde and the Dominican Republic, where many Dot House clients were born. This approach, along with Michele's push to improve Limited English Proficiency services at the Boston Housing Authority and her implementation of various outreach strategies in Dorchester, has helped break down barriers for low-income populations in need of legal representation. And she has also helped other attorneys learn what she has learned by helping to write training manuals - both on substantive law and intake practices - that have been shared throughout the Boston medical-legal partnership pro bono network.

Michele, your leadership has been described as, "at once visionary and hands-on," and it is not hard to see why. Thank you for giving back to your community in

such a profound way, and inspiring all of us to do the same.