

## The (Wonderful) PBSC Wills Project

ALUMNI MARY WAHBI '84 AND KAREN YOLEVSKI '05 OF BASMAN SMITH LLP HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE OPERATION OF ONE OF PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL AND LONG-STANDING PROJECTS – THE PBSC WILLS PROJECT.

As the legal firm partner for the Wills Project, which is run with the support of PBSC chapters at Osgoode Hall Law School and the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, Wahbi and Yolevski develop

precedent materials, run training sessions, mentor and supervise PBSC students, recruit other estate lawyers to the project, and personally take on dozens of clients on a pro bono basis.

"The Wills Project would not be possible without Mary Wahbi, who has supported it from the very start, and Karen Yolevski who has been working with Mary for several years now," said Nikki Gershbnain, National Director of PBSC, the only national student-run pro bono service organization in the world,

with chapters at 21 law schools in Canada.

The PBSC Wills Project, which began at Osgoode in the 1990s, now operates in six Canadian cities. PBSC student volunteers work with pro bono lawyers to draft wills and powers of attorney for low-income clients who do not have the resources to pay for legal assistance with estate planning. Students conduct screening interviews, provide legal information,

receive client instructions and draft the documents. Students also deliver Public Legal Education workshops to larger groups of individuals who are on a wait-list for the project.

Gershbnain explains that the Toronto program, originally limited to HIV-positive clients referred by the 519 Church Street Community Centre, has expanded to include referrals from Two-Spirited Peoples of the First Nations and Legal Aid Ontario. "Unfortunately, the need for the service far outweighs our capacity to take on more clients. We can't advertise the project broadly for fear of being flooded by potential clients, and even still we are constantly turning people away."

She says the hands-on Wills Project is a favourite of Osgoode and U of T law students, 17 of whom are involved with this year's program. "The placement opens up their eyes to poverty and access to justice issues in a very real way, which will hopefully make them better and more sensitive lawyers as a result."

It's also satisfying work for pro bono lawyers such as Wahbi, managing partner at Basman Smith LLP, and Yolevski. Wahbi sums up their involvement this way: "We believe that being involved in this project has helped us stay grounded, be more well-rounded professionals, and give to the community in general and to the legal community."



PHOTO: MICHAEL LUTWACK

Karen Yolevski '05 and Mary Wahbi '84 of Basman Smith LLP

## HENNICK MEDAL FOR LONG-TIME ONTARIO POLITICIAN

The Jay and Barbara Hennick Centre for Business and Law at Osgoode and the Schulich School of Business presented the 2013 Hennick Medal for Career Achievement to long-time Ontario Liberal politician Gregory "Greg" Sorbara on October 31.

Sorbara '78 (BA), '81 (LLB), '13 (LLD) served in the the Ontario Legislature for 21 years as a Liberal MPP and held a series of senior posts including Minister of Colleges and Universities, Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and Minister of Finance. He also served as the Ontario Liberal Party's campaign chair for three successful elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011. He resigned from the Legislature in the summer of 2012.

"Greg has had an exemplary career at the intersection of business, law and public policy, and truly deserves to receive the Hennick Medal," said Edward J. Waitzer, Jarislowsky Dimma Mooney Chair in Corporate Governance at Osgoode and Schulich, and director of the Hennick Centre. "He is a person of many accomplishments who brings passion and commitment to everything he does."

Sorbara has also served in a number of leadership roles at York University, including as a board member of the Alumni Association and as a member of the Advisory Council of the York Circle.

