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Six of Our Best: UB Law Alumni Association Presents 40th Annual Honors

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Alumni Association

Six of our best



Robert M. Elardo '82, John T. Frizzell '55 and Dean Nils Olsen



Kenneth Manning '77, Vikki Pryor '78 and Hon. Julio Fuentes '75

simply superb in every respect. By the time I approached graduation, I had no doubt that I had made the best possible decision in choosing the law as my calling.

"My greatest accomplishment and proudest moment is still the day I graduated from law school, because it was from that day that I would begin my career as a lawyer and I would enter a very proud profession. I couldn't ask for a better start than the one I got at this law school."

Vikki Pryor '78, president and CEO of the life insurance company SBLI USA, "for her exemplary performance in business."

Presenter Ernest J. Norman '70 noted that Pryor, whose work history includes positions with the Internal Revenue Service, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts and Oxford Health Plans in Connecticut, has led SBLI through a turnaround that created a \$1 billion company projecting an incredible 20 percent annual growth rate.

In accepting her award, Pryor said, "My time at the Law School did forever change the way that I think, and for that I am eternally grateful. My legal education taught me discipline. It broad-

ened my view of the world in ways that forever changed my path. It helped me to understand that asking questions and pulling up the corner of the rug is not making trouble; in fact, it is the only way to make real change.

"The law is a living, breathing, growing phenomenon – a change master, if you will. My experience at the Law School, my continued education and my embrace of change provided me with the analytical foundation and the confidence to do the job I do today.

"One thing is clear: We as lawyers have a legacy and a destiny. To those who say why, we must continue to lead the way in saying, why not?"

UB Law Alumni Association presents 40th annual honors

The resonance of four decades of excellence was in the air on May 8 as members of the UB Law Alumni Association gathered at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo for the group's 40th annual awards dinner.

The alumni group recognized six outstanding attorneys on a night that recognized both the Law School's past excellence – members of the Classes of 1942 and 1952, celebrating significant reunions, were present – and the promise of even better things to come from the State of New York's law school.

The recipients of this year's Distinguished Alumni Awards from the UB

Law Alumni Association:

Hon. Julio Fuentes '75, 3d Circuit Court of Appeals, "for his conscientious and diligent performance in the judiciary."

In his introduction, Hon. Eugene F. Pigott Jr. '73 cited Fuentes' courtesy, work ethic, listening skills, consistent preparation and overall professionalism on the bench. He also noted Fuentes' meteoric rise from Newark, N.J., City Court to the federal appeals court level.

"It was at UB Law School that I developed a real passion for the law," the honoree said. "That passion was strengthened by wonderful classmates and a faculty that was exceptional, dedicated and

Law School Dean Nils Olsen, "for outstanding service to the community by a non-alumnus."

Said UB President William R. Greiner: "We have a terrific College of Arts and Sciences, we have great graduate and undergraduate programs, but within the SUNY family, what really does distinguish us is our professional schools. I am particularly proud of the Law School. We have in Nils a most effective advocate for the Law School, but the beauty part is that he is one of the greatest and most effective advocates for our University. He has provided exceptional leadership for the University at Buffalo."

Olsen, greeted by a standing ovation, said: "I accept your generous award tonight not on my behalf but on behalf of a great law school." He cited "a gifted community of scholars, faculty, administrators and support staff," noted with appreciation the work of the school's several vice deans, and thanked the alumni as well for their financial and advisory support. "Our bridge courses and our many subject concentrations are the direct result of your willingness to share the secrets of your successful practices with our faculty and students," he said.

Kenneth Manning '77, partner and chairman of the governing committee at the Buffalo law firm Phillips, Lytle, Hitchcock, Blaine & Huber, "for his leadership by example as a private practitioner."

Peter J. Fiorella '63, presenting the award, noted that Manning, whose undergraduate degree at UB was in engineering, now serves on the dean's advisory councils for both the law and engineering schools. A past president of the UB Law Alumni Association, he has coordinated Phillips, Lytle's pro bono activities for over 10 years. The quality of his representation, said Fiorella, "is evident in the fact that three firms he represents have stayed with him for more than 20 years."

Manning thanked his family, his clients, his law partners and the Western New York judiciary, saying of the latter, "I have been fortunate to practice in many courtrooms in many jurisdictions. It would be difficult for them to duplicate what we have here."

Robert M. Elardo '82, head of the Erie County Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), was honored "for his commitment to public service."

"Not only has Bob devoted his career

to this work, he also inspires and encourages VLP lawyers," said Jean C. Powers '79. She cited some numbers: Last year the program developed 800 volunteers who donated 6,286 hours of legal time, with an estimated value of \$950,000. They handled 4,090 clients, 1,786 cases — and 91 percent of clients considered their VLP representation "highly satisfactory."

"In sum," Powers said, "Bob is a man of prodigious energy, keen intelligence, unquestionable integrity and deep compassion. Every day, he brings honor to our school and our legal community."

Elardo accepted the award in recognition of "the combined efforts of staff, volunteers and board members and all we have accomplished over the years. Times are very tough in the legal services for the poor world. We work in a time of shrinking budgets, and if anything there is an increasing need out there. It is my hope that the recognition this award brings to VLP will encourage even more of you to

one lifetime."

Carrell also noted that Frizzell has served for years as a volunteer firefighter. "He is a tower of strength who never loses his temper and always is a voice of reason. Organizations depend on him to bring people together and get things done."

"I have been involved in many law-related activities over the years, and I really enjoy them," Frizzell said. "I really enjoy being among lawyers and being among judges, being in different organizations."

"I think the Law School in particular, because of its prestige throughout this country, the good relations it enjoys with the Erie County bar, is wonderful — and that is why I am so happy about this award."

Terrence P. Flynn '88 served as chairman of the committee that organized the UBLAA dinner, at which Lynn A. Clarke '83 was introduced as the group's new president.



Above, Stephen L. Yonaty '94 and Melinda R. Saran '86, associate dean for student services.

Surrogate Judge Joseph S. Mattina '56 and Professor Louis A. Del Cotto '51.

participate in the Volunteer Lawyers Project. And if that doesn't work, you might be interested to know that we can give you CLE credit for working with us, and of course all your donations are tax-deductible."

John T. Frizzell '55, of Hiscock Barclay Saperston & Day, was honored "for his many contributions to the betterment of our community."

Law School Vice Dean Alan Carrell said of the honoree: "Jack Frizzell has literally spent thousands of hours as a volunteer helping organizations in Western New York and beyond. The breadth, quality and length of service he has provided seems impossible to accomplish in

"The UB Law Alumni Association gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the following underwriters who helped make this dinner possible: M&T Investment Group, Ticor Title Insurance Co., Alan Fenster Associates, Inc., National Fuel Gas Distribution Corp., Peter M. Vito & Associates, Inc., Brisbane Consulting Group, LLC, Business First and Buffalo Law Journal, Buyers & Kaczor Reporting Services, Inc., Coronet Process Service, CSC United States Corp. Co., The Daily Record, Diversity Training Workplace Solutions, Inc., Lauley Service Inc., National Fire Adjustment Co. Inc. and R.L. Sonnenberger Land Surveyors.