

New York Women's Bar Association Foundation Breakfast Featuring the Honorable Judith S. Kaye

By Christina Kallas and Marian Burnbaum

On Wednesday, December 2, 2009, the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation was honored to have as guest speaker at its latest fundraising breakfast the Honorable Judith S. Kaye, recently retired Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals, and currently Of Counsel at Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP. Judge Kaye's timely topic was "Turning Crisis into Opportunity."

Judge Kaye spoke to the audience briefly about her own life experiences. Her informal and candid style captivated the audience. She recounted with great humor how originally she set out to be a journalist, but found that women reporters were limited to covering "society" news. Having discovered a new interest in the law, she attended law school, only to find that she had picked yet another profession where women were routinely not hired. And the rest is history - or perhaps more accurately, "herstory."

Judge Kaye was most interested in responding to audience questions. The Foundation has extended an ongoing breakfast invitation to the young women of Washington Irving High School's Law and Public Service House, and they were especially happy to oblige her. One student asked the Judge about her advice to young women considering their career options. Judge Kaye responded that they should be positive, which she acknowledged is not always the easiest thing to do, adding "Don't be intimidated, and never give up." Judging from her life story, it looks as if that's quite sound advice.

Another student, who introduced herself as "a future Manhattan District Attorney," asked for advice about how to best fill that role and Judge Kaye replied, "prepare to live a long life."

Judge Kaye also discussed her decision to continue to practice after retiring from the bench. She felt that the best way for her to use her talents and abilities was to do so in conjunction with the resources of her new firm. Judge Kaye's new role will enable her to bring together many of the people who hold senior positions in government and the private sector to effectuate meaningful changes in the lives of people who need help - particularly children. She outlined her ultimate goal, saying, "Wouldn't it be great if every child everywhere had at least one person who really cared about what happened to her?" The audience responded with resounding applause.

While Judge Kaye expressed her pleasure at speaking before the Foundation audience, picking out many of her colleagues and friends in the audience, she was most delighted by the presence of the Washington Irving students. Judge Kaye spent time with the students after the conclusion of her remarks and graciously encouraged them to stay in touch with her.

The members of the New York Women's Bar Association and Board members of the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation have generously sponsored each student's attendance at the breakfasts by purchasing tickets to the Foundation's Fundraising Breakfasts on their behalf. Twelve

students attended the breakfast, the largest turnout of students to date. The students who attended the breakfast were chosen for their academic performance and their interest in the law.

Led by NYWBA member Marian Burnbaum under the direction of Executive Principal Bernardo Ascona, the Law and Public Service House is one of the small learning communities within Washington Irving High School, a Title I public high school in Manhattan which attracts students from every borough. The focus of the Law and Public Service House is to give students a working knowledge of and appreciation for the structures of government, the United States Constitution and various legal specialties. The students receive practical training through debate, mock trial, the Model United Nations program, mentoring and internships. The students and staff work with a variety of organizations, such as Cleary Gottlieb Steen Hamilton LLP, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, Cardozo Law School, Fordham University School of Law, the Justice Resource Center, NYCLA, and, of course, the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation. The program has made a long-lasting impression on the students, many of whom have gone on to study at the nation's finest colleges.

For information on the Foundation's next breakfast, or to make a donation to the Foundation, please visit the Foundation website at www.nywbaf.org.

Christina Kallas and Marian Burnbaum are members of the Board of Directors of the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation.



L to R: Karen M. Mitchell, President, New York Women's Bar Association Foundation, Inc.; The Hon. Judith S. Kaye; and Katherine B. Posner, Former President, New York Women's Bar Association Foundation, Inc.