

Press Release

Akerman Give Back Campaign Grows Unprecedented Partnership with National CASA Association for Children

June 27, 2016

Inaugural Recipient of Akerman Academic
Excellence Scholarship for Foster Youth
Announced

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients and communities across the Americas, continues to advance one of the most ambitious philanthropic and pro bono efforts for abused and neglected children in the family court system through its partnership with the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association (National CASA). CASA is a network of volunteer advocates who ensure the highest quality advocacy on behalf of America's most vulnerable children. The firm today announced important milestones achieved during its third annual Give Back Campaign that have the potential to make a lasting impact on these at-risk youth.

During Foster Care Awareness Month, more than 1,200 Akerman lawyers and other professionals and staff participated in nearly 50 Give Back activities over a five day period to promote and support child advocacy for the 600,000 children who enter the overburdened legal and social services system in the United States each year.

Since the inception of the Give Back Campaign, Akerman employees across the country have

contributed through pro bono legal service, community volunteerism and extensive fundraising efforts. Their contributions to the local CASA/GAL programs in Akerman's markets have helped more than 16,000 foster youth and recruit and train nearly 7,700 volunteers. These Give Back efforts are in addition to the firm's continuing contributions of pro bono legal services and financial support to numerous and varied community organizations across the United States.

"National CASA envisions a world where every abused or neglected child is given the opportunity to thrive in a safe, loving and permanent home," says Tara Perry, chief executive officer of the National CASA Association. "Of the over 600,000 children passing through the foster care and court system each year, approximately 400,000 children are without a CASA/GAL volunteer advocate. National CASA continues to work in partnership with its state and local programs in 49 states to close that gap, and Akerman's generosity year-after-year is helping us make a real impact."

Strengthening the Pathway to Higher Education

The annual Akerman Give Back Campaign is a dedicated time of the year to bring collective focus to the firm's philanthropic and pro bono efforts, particularly within the areas of education and youth development. This year, the firm honored Katherinne Peraza from Brownsburg High School in Indiana as the inaugural recipient of the Akerman Academic Excellence Scholarship.

The Akerman Scholarship, which awards up to \$10,000 for four years of enrollment in higher education, was established in 2015 as part of the firm's historic \$1 million pledge to National CASA. Created to reduce the financial burden of higher education for young adults who have spent time in the foster care system, this endowed fund supports those who have demonstrated outstanding academic commitment and readiness for success.

“During the National CASA Conference, I invited Katherinne up to the podium to be acknowledged for her outstanding academic achievements and her ability to transcend a life in foster care to pursue a brighter future,” said Charles Brumback, chair of Akerman’s Philanthropic Initiative. “I am extremely proud that through the Akerman Give Back Campaign we have helped to ensure that Katherinne is celebrated and supported when she attends college in the fall.”

Peraza will begin her freshman year this fall at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). She aspires to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. Her dream is to travel to different countries, particularly to her home country El Salvador, where she can apply the skills she learns in college to assist sick children and families.

Throughout her middle school and high school years, Peraza has been a motivated and accomplished honors student, with sound leadership abilities and a focus on helping others. She serves on the leadership board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), and is a member of the Latino Youth Leaders of Indiana as well as the Indiana Youth Advisory Board. She also has been involved in the National Honor Society, Best Buddies, and several other academic and volunteer activities.

Building Communities and a Pipeline of Opportunities

The third annual Give Back Campaign also brought the Akerman and CASA/GAL networks together with members of the higher-education, technology and start-up communities, including LaunchCode, Wyncode Academy and The Idea Center@MDC.

During an exclusive workshop in Akerman’s Miami office, high school students gained hands-on programming experience, where they learned to write their first line of code. The session taught them the fundamentals of creating computer software,

apps and websites and provided them access to resources to pursue a career in coding. Two students also were awarded a seat in Wyncode's three-week Wyncamp program, where they will learn how to master code.

Other Akerman offices organized community awareness events, providing a platform for local CASA/GAL representatives, a family court judge and other court officers to discuss the positive impact of a legal advocate on a child's future. Multiple volunteer and fundraising drives were held across all of Akerman's markets and employees shared the experiences with their families, friends and clients, who also gave their support through donations.

Helping National CASA Achieve its Mission on all Fronts

To provide National CASA greater access to the resources required to serve at-risk youth, Akerman launched a new multi-giving platform called Akerman Gives during the 2016 Give Back Campaign. Akerman Gives is a fully integrated web-based portal designed to help National CASA more effectively collect all forms of giving from Akerman employees across the country, including financial contributions, volunteer commitments and pledges to serve as a guardian ad litem. The new platform streamlines the fundraising process and introduces a centralized system for National CASA and its local GAL programs to communicate and collaborate with contributors in real-time, and move the needle on volunteer engagement and retention.

The system is also connected to Akerman's workplace giving program, allowing individuals to make a one-time donation or ongoing contributions to the CASA/GAL program of their choice even after the five-day Give Back Campaign concludes.

"Evolving our existing giving platform with Akerman enabled us to expand our fundraising approach, allowing us to create a model that we can replicate

with other national partners,” said Perry. “Together we have been able to build a partnership that supports local relationships between Akerman offices and local CASA/GAL programs who are providing services to America’s most vulnerable children.”

The Financial Times recently ranked Akerman among the nation’s most innovative law firms in the social responsibility - projects category for creating a first-of-its-kind law firm partnership with National CASA during the firm’s inaugural Give Back Campaign. In addition to the countless Give Back pledges of time to serve foster youth, firm lawyers and other professionals are also helping National CASA achieve its mission on all fronts by providing pro bono legal services to the organization throughout the year.

About Akerman LLP

Akerman LLP is a leading transactions and trial law firm known for its core strengths in middle market M&A, within the financial services and real estate industries, and for a diverse Latin America practice. With more than 600 lawyers and government affairs professionals and a network of 20 offices, it is ranked among the top 100 law firms in the United States by *The American Lawyer* (2016). Akerman also is ranked among the top 60 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer’s Diversity Scorecard* (2016).

Akerman has a long history of public service and corporate citizenship that stems from a deep commitment to serve as allies and advocates in the community. The firm’s philanthropic and pro bono efforts focus on important, worthwhile and vital causes – particularly in the areas of education and youth development. Akerman addresses critical social issues through community and client partnerships, employee volunteerism and pro bono service to expand the reach of shared purpose-driven initiatives.