

Press Release

Akerman Awarded ‘Community Advocate of the Year’ for Foster Youth

December 23, 2014

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving client across the Americas, was honored by the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program with the “Community Advocate of the Year” award in the 13th Judicial Circuit, which recognizes an organization that has made significant contributions to promote volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children in the foster care system.

Akerman made a pledge to achieve even greater impact for today’s youth with the launch of a firm-wide “Give Back” campaign during Foster Care Awareness Month in May 2014. For its inaugural campaign, Akerman became the first law firm to partner nationally with the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association and its local guardian ad litem programs (GAL), raising donations, recruiting volunteers and increasing awareness of the CASA/GAL mission.

Within five days of the campaign launch, Akerman lawyers and staff across the country collectively pledged more than 14,000 volunteer hours and raised more than \$100,000, with the pledged time and contributions having the potential to improve the lives of more than 200 foster children.

Since May, lawyers and staff throughout the firm have contributed numerous hours toward pro bono legal service, volunteerism and fundraising for

underprivileged children and their families. In the 13th Judicial Circuit, which spans Hillsborough County in Tampa, Fla., Akerman has donated lap tops, school supplies, toys and clothes for children in foster care. Recently, Karen Meyer Buesing, a partner in firm's Tampa office, directed a staged reading of "Duck Hunter Shoots Angel" by Mitch Albom at Stageworks Theater to benefit the 13th Judicial Circuit GAL Program.

Intensifying its philanthropic commitment to its many communities, Akerman recently announced that the Hon. William A. Van Nortwick Jr., a Florida First District Court of Appeal Judge and a renowned champion for equal justice and pro bono legal services, will join Akerman in January as partner-in-charge of the firm's national pro bono program. Van Nortwick will help expand the firm's pro bono efforts with an emphasis on achieving impact within education and youth development. This will build upon the Akerman's recent Give Back campaign and its work with CASA/GAL.

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 National Law Journal NLJ* 350 (2014). Akerman also is ranked among the top 50 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer's Diversity Scorecard* (2014).