

Public: Recent News

Charlotte Lawyers, Law Students Lend A Hand

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Hands on Charlotte is a nonprofit volunteer service organization that has been around since 1991.

Throughout that time, local lawyers have supported the organization in its quest to “strengthen our community and enrich lives by mobilizing a diverse corps of citizens in direct, volunteer service” by “providing individuals, families, businesses and community groups with volunteering opportunities that are flexible, rewarding and fun.”



Mel Garofalo prunes to perfection.

But Saturday’s Service Juris Day marked the first time that members of Charlotte’s legal community had been called upon to tackle a particular project on their own. Make that five projects rolled into one, all of which targeted the Turning Point Academy, an alternative school for middle and high school students who have received long-term suspensions.

“We had participation by more 125 members of the legal community in Charlotte,” said Hands on Charlotte’s associated director, Bob Young, including some 40 students from the Charlotte School of Law.

“We had great participation and great organization by the steering committee made up of representatives and lawyers from firms here in Charlotte as well as nonprofits with lawyers on their staff who organized and provided outreach to fellow lawyers.”



From left, Michael Barker, Jonathan Krisko, Ken Kerr and Anup Shah work their magic for Hands on Charlotte.

Serving as honorary co-chairs for the event were mayoral candidates Anthony Foxx and John Lassiter.

“That was a great thing, getting the two top mayoral candidates to serve as honorary co-chairs,” Young added. “They talked about the need for service and giving back to young folks



in the community. We had judges, lawyers and people of all shapes and sizes coming together for one cause.

“For the first time ever doing this we were very pleased with the participation and the degree with which this was embraced by the community here in Charlotte.”

The North Carolina Bar Association was extremely well represented in the

organization and implementation of Service Juris Day. In addition to Lassiter and Foxx, every member of the steering committee was also a member of the NCBA.

“The participating volunteers and sponsoring law firms raised the funds to pay for all the mulch, plants, benches and other supplies,” said Lex Erwin who chaired the steering committee. “Among other things, we pulled weeds from the playground, spread mulch in the playground and around the trees and bushes, installed bench seating, created a memorial garden for a recently deceased teacher, installed flooring in the gym and applied water sealant to an existing ropes course.

“Although it was a hot summer day, the volunteers had a great time and really made a visible difference in the beauty of the school. I am sure the children will appreciate and take pride in their newly landscaped school.”

It was also a great training experience in public service for the CharlotteLaw students, noted Jennifer Chandler who serves as president of the Student Bar Association.

“Service Juris Day was a great success for the Charlotte community with over 40 CharlotteLaw students and numerous attorneys working side by side to improve Turning Point Academy’s school facilities,” Chandler said. “This event was a great way for CharlotteLaw students to volunteer in a way that impacts Charlotte positively, showing our commitment to the community.”

Attorney Mark Kutny, who also served on the steering committee, agreed.

“We intend to make Service Juris Day an annual event,” Kutny said, “and hope that it will continue to grow in size each year to benefit multiple areas of our community.”

The steering committee also included Rachel Paletta of the Council for Children’s Rights, Andrea Chomakos, Matt Fleishman, Marc Gustafson, Michael Juby, Jonathon Krisko and Kathleen Lucchesi.



Volunteers did not shy away from heavy lifting.