

Spotlight on A Firm: Gibbons P.C.

By Jiayi Jiang

NYWBA Spotlight is a column that features the experiences of different law firms in supporting their female lawyers. We hope these experiences will help your firm in understanding how to best support its female lawyers.

According to a study published in *The National Jurist*, tough economic times have propelled law firms to expand women's initiatives such as work life balance to entice and retain talent. Gibbons P.C. is a law firm that has reached higher stratospheres because of the success of its women's initiatives. The firm's philosophy is that its women's initiatives benefit its women, the firm itself, and the larger community in which we all live.

Nineteen years ago, when Kim Catullo, Administrative Director of Gibbons' NYC office, first started at Gibbons there were few female partners. Today, Kim, along with several female attorneys, sits on the executive committee. Gibbons' female partners make up 14% of the total partner population. *Working Mother* magazine has rated Gibbons as a best law firm three years in a row and Gibbons became only the third law firm to receive the prestigious Catalyst Award. Behind these statistics are actual stories reflecting Gibbons' commitment to its women's initiatives. Lucy Emhardt, an associate in the intellectual property department, spoke of the firm allowing her time to partake in the National Association of Women Lawyers conference. Myriam Rastatter, an associate in the corporate department, spoke of how the work life balance program allowed her to work and take care of her family after the birth of her daughter.

Ghillaine Reid, a director in the business and commercial litigation department, spoke about how Gibbons' women's initiatives are "for women but not just women." In fact, the firm's women's initiatives have included clients. Clients and Gibbons' attorneys meet in conferences to discuss female perspectives of the business world. Gibbons' work life balance program allows all of its attorneys to take a 3/5 schedule for up to one year that requires 60% of full-time, which equals 105 hours per month. Attorneys can also take a 4/5 schedule for an unlimited period of time that requires 80% of full-time, which equals 140 hours per month.

Another key part of Gibbons' women's initiatives is mentorship. Members of its mentorship program are divided into groups of 7 to 8 that cut across practice areas. These mentorship groups meet as often as they like to discuss career or personal topics. Looking toward the future, Gibbons plans to expand its women's initiatives. Recognizing the success of its mentorship program, Gibbons will extend its mentoring program into the community via a "dress for success" program and other community service projects.

Jiayi Jiang is a third year student at Brooklyn Law School and a member of the NYWBA Committee to Advance the Status of Women in the Profession. Jiayi welcomes comments and suggestions at Jiayi.jiang@brooklaw.edu.



Gibbons Directors and senior level executives at the 2009 Catalyst Awards Conference and Dinner, at which the firm was honored for its innovative, successful Women's Initiative.



In 2006, the new class of attorneys promoted to Directors and Counsel at Gibbons P.C. entirely comprised women, including women on reduced hours schedules.



Gibbons is a proud sponsor of the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and numerous other women-focused charitable organizations.