

Appleseed This Week

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Symposium Participants

Moderators:

Betsy Cavendish
Executive Director,
Appleseed

Robert E. Herzstein
Of Council,
Miller & Chevalier

Eric S. Koenig
Retired, *Microsoft*

Panelists:

Creating a Pro Bono Culture in Mexico

Experts Discuss How to Build, Support Mexican Pro Bono Network

To ensure justice and opportunity for all segments of society, Appleseed relies heavily on the commitment of its many pro bono partners - a commitment that, unfortunately, lacks comparable support in other countries. Seeking to correct that situation, Mexico Appleseed has worked since its inception to better cultivate the pro bono impulse within the Mexican legal community.

Such efforts were the central theme of an Appleseed symposium held yesterday at American University's Washington College of Law. Consisting of two panels, "Creating a Pro Bono and Philanthropic Culture in Mexico" offered a comprehensive assessment of pro bono service in the U.S. and Latin America by several distinguished experts. Please see the sidebar for a complete list of panelists.

"The culture of organized civil society has been growing steadily in Mexico," said Maru Cortazar, executive director of Mexico Appleseed. "But if we consider the current problems caused by the international financial crisis and drug violence, the result is that more individuals and communities are vulnerable." The question, then, is how to effectively motivate and focus a pro bono response?

A crucial first step, long understood by Mexico Appleseed and similar organizations, is to institutionalize pro bono culture by promoting top-down leadership at law firms, corporations, and NGOs; by establishing formal policies that encourage pro bono work and provide the necessary structural support; and by providing public recognition of these efforts.

Echoing Cortazar, several panelists noted that while Mexico has a flourishing civil society, the pro bono spirit has not been broadly

Maru Cortazar
Executive Director,
Mexico Appleseed

Lisa Dewey
Pro Bono Partner,
DLA Piper

Elliott Milstein
Professor of Law,
Washington College of Law

Scott Rechler
Manager, Fellow Security
Program,
Ashoka

Alexis E. Rovzar
Partner in Latin America
Practice,
White & Case

Macarena Saez
International Programs
Coordinator, *WCL*

Antonia Stolper
Partner, *Sherman and
Sterling, Cyrus Vance
Center*

inculcated by law schools, bar associations, and other institutions which, as here in the U.S., collectively stress the importance of volunteerism and social service.

The importance of incentives was also highlighted by the panel. Lisa Dewey, pro bono partner at DLA Piper, noted that in addition to "cashing emotional paychecks," attorneys and law firms can use pro bono work to burnish their reputations, develop and enhance their legal skills, connect theory to practice, and reach new clients. Moreover, according to Macarena Saez, international programs coordinator at the WCL, pro bono work in the U.S. is generally perceived as "glamorous," the result of better "marketing."

According to Saez, "it is not that [Latin American] lawyers do not care;" rather, it is that pro bono has less systemic support and fewer outlets in those countries.

Consequently, one of Mexico Appleseed's central projects has been the creation of the "Mexican Pro Bono Network," a broad coalition of law firms, corporate lawyers, law schools, bar associations, and other professionals to volunteer legal support, free of ideology or political affiliation, to those social sectors essential to the collective interest and common good.

For more information, visit the [Mexico Appleseed website](#) (English translation available through Google). Photos and a webcast of the symposium will soon be available on the [national website](#).
