

Giving Back



Fallon C. DePina '08 and Christine Jean-Louis '08

Three young Law School graduates active in the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association (see sidebar, p. 36) — **Natalie Braswell '07**, **Fallon C. DePina '08**, and **Christine Jean-Louis '08** — recently pooled their considerable talents and energy to help establish the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association Endowment at UConn Law. Once fully funded, proceeds from the endowment will be used to award an annual scholarship “for a first-year student at UConn Law who has overcome significant economic, linguistic, cultural

“No cause at the Law School is more important than opening doors for students for whom a low-cost professional education is a gateway to opportunity.”

JEREMY PAUL
DEAN

or educational obstacles or who belongs to a group historically underrepresented in law school and the legal profession. It will be awarded to a student who presents a record of leadership in diversity issues, or particular promise of substantial and distinctive multicultural contributions to UConn Law and the legal profession.”

According to Braswell, Crawford’s vice president, the endowment, which will be held by the University of Connecticut Law School Foundation, Inc., was first envisioned by Crawford’s founding members, but it wasn’t until the executive board of the organization began to develop a plan of action a few years ago that the Association’s vision began to take shape. “Many of us were UConn Law alums and still had contacts with the administration at the Law School,” recalls Braswell, who is currently general counsel for the Office of the State (Connecticut) Comptroller. “We contacted the Law School Foundation...and after months of discussion... the endowment was officially established at the beginning of 2011.”

sidebar

“As a member of Crawford’s Student Initiatives Committee, I was tasked with investigating different ways we could broaden student giving (beyond the three unendowed scholarships Crawford already awards),” explains DePina, an associate in the New Haven office of Wiggin and Dana LLP and Crawford’s treasurer. “So many of us have strong ties to UConn Law, and it seemed like such a good idea to start with the Law School and with an endowment that’s professionally managed.”

Going with UConn was such a natural fit,” adds Jean-Louis, who will join DePina at Wiggin and Dana once she completes the second year of her clerkship with U.S. District Court Judge Alvin W. Thompson. “We could get our feet wet, learn how the endowment process works, understand what else we needed to do — and begin the task of funding the endowment.”

According to Braswell, DePina and Jean-Louis, the fundraising effort was kicked off in April at Crawford’s annual dinner, which featured a silent auction and the distribution of pledge cards. “I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from all the dinner attendees,” says DePina. “We raised approximately \$10,000 of the \$30,000 needed to establish the endowment.”

“We have five years to get that done,” adds Jean-Louis, Crawford’s immediate past president, “so the fact that we are a third of our way to our goal after only a few months puts us ahead of schedule.”

To contribute to the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association Scholarship Endowment, visit <http://lawfoundation.law.uconn.edu>, click on “Make a Gift,” select Annual Fund and write “Crawford Black Bar” on the “In Tribute” line. Or you can call 860-570-5340 or mail a check to University of Connecticut Law School Foundation, Development Office, 45 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105. Please write “Crawford Scholarship” on the memo line. ■

The George W. Crawford Black Bar Association (www.georgecrawford-blackbar.org) is a statewide volunteer organization of attorneys, judges and law students that represents the collective body of Black attorneys in Connecticut. Crawford’s purpose includes enhancing the role of Black people in the legal profession and increasing their numbers in the state; focusing on legal issues that affect members of the Black community; providing a vehicle for interaction between members of the Association and Black businesses and professional and other organizations in the state; and undertaking a myriad of professional development programs, activities and projects in pursuit of its mission.

Crawford’s roots go back to 1977, when the Greater Hartford Black Law Society was established. In 1979, the Society changed its name to the George W. Crawford Law Association in honor of George W. Crawford, Yale Law School’s second Black graduate and an outstanding advocate and public servant during a legal career that spanned almost 70 years. In 2003, Crawford once again changed its name to the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association to help make the organization’s purpose and identity more visible to newcomers to Connecticut and the legal profession. Today, Crawford is a vibrant association through which its approximately 300 members and supporters voice opinions and engage in meaningful, collective actions on issues facing Black attorneys and the many and diverse communities they serve.

“Crawford members reached out to us as law students and showed us what the legal profession in Connecticut could look like in the future.”

CHRISTINE JEAN-LOUIS '08

CLERK FOR THE HONORABLE ALVIN W. THOMPSON

PAST PRESIDENT, GEORGE W. CRAWFORD BLACK BAR ASSOCIATION

iving Back

