

HENNEPIN LAWYER

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FOCUS ON ARTS, SPORTS AND THE LAW



ON THE COVER

Diversity Award Honorees

Judge Peter Reyes

Kathy Hubbard

Xcel Energy's Jim Altman

Diversity Award Honorees

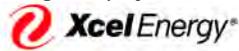


Lawyer Award
Judge Peter Reyes
Minnesota Court of Appeals



Non-Lawyer Award
Kathy Hubbard
Madigan, Dahl & Harlan



Legal Employer Award

Accepting the award: Jim Altman
Vice President & Deputy General Counsel

Each year the Hennepin County Bar Association's Diversity and Inclusion Committee recognizes a lawyer, a non-lawyer, and a legal employer for their outstanding commitment to diversity in the profession. Individual awardees for 2016 are: Judge Peter Reyes (Minnesota Court of Appeals) and non-lawyer Katherine Hubbard (Madigan, Dahl and Harlan). Xcel Energy receives the legal employer award, with the award accepted by Jim Altman. Recipients will be recognized at the HCBA annual meeting on June 1.

Judge Peter Reyes

Judge Reyes' uncle once told him to "never forget where you came from and always remember to give back to the community." Judge Reyes has not only strived to give back to the Hispanic community but also the legal community, the Minnesota community, and the greater community. He sits at the Minnesota Judicial Center as a judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals and is honored to be serving as a judge in his home state of Minnesota. Judge Reyes finds it "very humbling to be recognized by [his] peers for work done to further diversity and inclusion in the legal profession." He is grateful to think that he is on the path of fulfilling the promise that he made to his family to continue to give back to the community. Judge Reyes has demonstrated an active and consistent commitment to diversity and is undoubtedly deserving of the 2016 HCBA Diversity Award.

Judge Reyes has been actively involved in his community and has shown a commitment to diversity in both his profession and his community. Throughout his career, he has been active in the Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association (MHBA), where he served as president from 2000-2003. Along with many other accomplishments within this organization, Reyes is extremely passionate about the MHBA mentorship program, which pairs experienced attorneys with law students. Throughout his life, he has often sought advice from mentors Harry Gwinnell and Ron Hunter from Cargill, and Judge Salvador Rosas. Reyes started the MHBA mentorship program so that others could receive guidance similar to what he received throughout his career.

In addition to his involvement with the MHBA, Reyes has also been actively involved in the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA), where he served as the national president in 2012-2013, and established three separate, successful ongoing programs: the HNBA/Metlife National Mentorship Program, the HNBA/Microsoft IP Law Institute, and the Collaborative Bar Leadership Academy. Prior to serving as the national president of the HNBA, he held various positions within the HNBA and chaired the 2007 mid-year conference, and the 2010 Annual Conference in Minnesota, both recognized as among the most successful conferences in the association's history.

Prior to being appointed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals by Governor Mark Dayton in 2014, Judge Reyes had quite the prominent career. He graduated from the University of St. Thomas with a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry. He began his professional life as an environmental scientist, which ultimately led him to attending William Mitchell College of Law. During law school he was a judicial law clerk to Judge Rosas, on whom he fondly reflects as an influential person in his life. Judge Reyes also worked as an associate at Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, and a partner at Barnes & Thornburg, specializing in litigation and intellectual property. He also served as in-house counsel at Cargill, Inc.

Reyes was the first of his family to go to college, but has been supported by his family throughout all of his endeavors. He loves to spend time with his wife, three children, and five grandchildren. He also thoroughly enjoys fishing, boating, and going to the family cabin.

By Theresa Bea
Ms. Bea is an associate attorney at the firm of Walling, Berg & Debele

Kathy Hubbard

The concept of diversifying personnel was once radical and still is fundamental. The implementation of the idea requires energy that can generate change within a system, that is, someone who is dynamic, someone like Katherine Hubbard, the administrator for Madigan, Dahl & Harlan. She is also an active member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for the Association of Legal Administrators Minnesota (ALAMN).

A typical week for Hubbard at Madigan, Dahl & Harlan consists of managing the firm's finances, marketing, and facilities; supervising non-attorney personnel; and, of course, overseeing the human resources department. Her job, as she describes it, "Is to support everyone there so that they can give the client the best representation." When asked how she got to be a law firm administrator, she laughed and told me in so many words that it was by coincidence, a path to which many people—even some lawyers—can relate. However, the work that Hubbard is doing at the ALAMN is no coincidence; it is in fact the product of collaboration and hard work.

The focus of the ALAMN Diversity and Inclusion Committee is to foster "diversity and inclusion in the legal community" through education, networking, and outreach. In 2012, bemoaning a lack of diversity within the ALAMN and in the potential candidate pools members were encountering at their jobs, Hubbard joined a team that sought to combat the deficiency with action. Hubbard's research with diversity professionals and other Association of Legal Administrators chapters came to fruition when she presented the dual-phased "Diversity Initiative" to the ALAMN, which it approved. It also led to the formation of the committee.

Hubbard is working to make diversity meaningful to others in the legal world. As she describes the word, "It's appreciating our differences instead of fearing them. It's easy enough to think of diversity when we think of what we can see that's different in other people but there are all different definitions of diversity. There are also orientation, marital status, and economic status, ...and it makes us come to the table with different perspectives and different priorities." Phase I of the Diversity Initiative concentrated on education, awareness, recognition, and recruitment of diverse committee members.

Phase II focused on outreach to local high school students to inform about career opportunities within the legal field. Hubbard said that the inaugural career fair held with Patrick Henry High School students from North Minneapolis in April 2015 was aimed at increasing the students' knowledge about careers in the law profession, from lawyers to administrators like herself, and other roles such as IT. Based on the success of last year, the committee plans to partner with additional schools this year. Ideally, the resumes of these students will be in front of ALAMN members in the coming years.

It is clear that Hubbard wants people to work in the legal field, especially people who can bring a distinct perspective to the legal community. Now she is in the beginning stages of building a program within the ALAMN aimed at hiring veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Hubbard recognizes how her work with the committee translates to her work at Madigan, Dahl & Harlan in that it has made her hyper-aware of the meaning of the word "diversity" and its significance on both a business and social level. When I asked Hubbard how she applies her idea of diversity or what people can do who may struggle with how to define the word, or how to make it meaningful, she stated, "It starts at a grassroots level, getting to know your neighbors. It starts with you being proactive."

By Theresa Ashmead

Ms. Ashmead is a law clerk to Referee Mike Furnstahl

Xcel Energy

The Xcel Energy legal department has shown itself to be a leader in diversity and inclusion through its General Counsel's Employee Excellence and Equality Committee (GCEEE). As one of Xcel Energy's 11 internal business resource groups (BRGs), the GCEEE includes representatives from across Xcel Energy's law department (ranging from legal administrators to executive leadership) and leads the legal department's diversity and inclusion efforts. For over a decade, the GCEEE has been building partnerships internally and externally to promote diversity and inclusion.

According to Jim Altman, Vice President and Deputy General Counsel, the Xcel Energy law department fosters diversity and inclusion through its intentional hiring practices, community outreach, company programming, and external financial support.

Xcel Energy's hiring practices have proven effective. The law department currently has 39 attorneys, of which 20 are female. In addition, out of the seven lead attorneys, two are minorities and four are women. A focused hiring initiative over the past 10 years helped increase the department's diversity representation, and a cultural shift has boosted retention. A BRG for new employees helps incoming lawyers find support and mentorship. The GCEEE participates in new employee orientation, which lets new employees know that the department is a resource to be utilized.

The intentional hiring practices extend to more than just traditional employees. The legal department also supports building the pipeline of diverse lawyers by participating in law school programs aimed at providing diverse students with summer associate opportunities. Since 2011, the department has participated in the Twin Cities Diversity in Practice IL clerkship to help develop IL students from racial and ethnic groups historically under-represented in the legal profession.

Internally, GCEEE works to create an inclusive, transparent environment by offering training on bias and diversity to the legal department and company-wide. This has entailed bringing in big names to speak on diversity. In 2015, diversity expert and TED speaker Verna Meyers was brought in to speak on the subconscious attitudes that are held toward "out-groups" and how to drive inclusiveness in work environments. In the year prior, there was a company-wide screening of "Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin" with the movie's co-producer, highlighting Bayard Rustin, an African-American civil rights activist marginalized in history because he was gay.

Xcel Energy also drives its diversity and inclusion initiatives by financially supporting organizations with similar goals. To support diversity in the legal profession, the law department sponsors the Minnesota American Indian Bar Association (and contributes toward its scholarship fund), Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers, Minnesota Women Lawyers, and many others. It also supports other organizations whose practices help support criminal and social justice systems, such as the Minnesota Loan Repayment Assistance Program and the Innocence Project of Minnesota.

The Xcel Energy legal department has created a successful blend of ingredients that has allowed for much internal and external success. They are proud of what they have accomplished and continue to position themselves to serve the generations to come.

By Beth Luoma

Ms Luoma is an associate attorney at DuVal & Associates