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Bar News *Bar News Highlight*

The "Highlight" page of *Bar News* presents brief stories dealing with lawyer activities outside the practice of law. This page also spotlights recent activities and special events around the Bar. If you have a unique talent or avocation outside the daily practice of law or would like to recommend a colleague to be "highlighted"—or if your local or specialty bar or legal organization has marked a notable milestone—please contact Amy Sreenen at asreenen@cobar.org or Leona Martinez at leonamartinez@cobar.org.

Denver Law Firm Supports Youth by Sponsoring Education

Although a busy law firm and mounds of paperwork are commonplace for most attorneys every working day, it's something new and different for 15-year-old Nicole Candeloria. Once a week, a bus picks up Nicole and takes her to the Denver insurance defense firm of McConnell Siderious Fleischer Houghtaling & Craigmile ("MSFHC"), where she writes letters, makes copies, and provides administrative assistance to the firm's seventeen attorneys and staff.

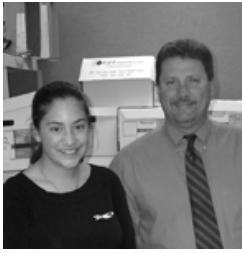
Including Nicole, MSFHC sponsors four students to attend Arrupe Jesuit High School, where they receive a private, college preparatory education and earn a work study salary paid by the firm. MSFHC partner Walter Houghtaling likes the sense of community the students bring to the firm: "As '60s and '70s children, we embrace social opportunities. Everyone here is all for it."

Arrupe Jesuit High School opened in the fall of 2003. Students attend regular classes four days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. On the fifth day, they work at MSFHC or one of the other eighteen sponsoring companies, which include a hospital, energy company, radio station, and health insurance company.

At MSFHC, Nicole and the other students acquire general office skills and specifically learn about the workaday business of a law firm. Nicole recalls her impressions of her first day at MSFHC: "I thought there would be a lot of yelling and screaming." However, rather than being exposed to elevated emotions, she has been introduced to the workings of an office, including the paperwork, copying, and filing.

"It feels good to see people in a meeting reading out of a binder that I put together," she says, a hint of pride in her voice.

Arrupe Jesuit High School student Nicole Candeloria poses with Walter Houghtaling, from MSFHC, a law firm that sponsors four students, who work at the firm.



In addition to her administrative duties, the firm permits Nicole to sit in on some depositions. The firm also includes her in social occasions, such as the office holiday party and staff outing to a Colorado Rockies game.

"This has been a great learning experience for all of us," says Cindy Fleischner, another partner at the firm. "It has also taught us, as attorneys and staff, how little the public knows about the legal system, [as well as] how to be good teachers and to be patient. We could hire a law student to do this, . . . but we actually contribute to the positive involvement of these high school students in the legal system, and help improve their work skills and maturity."

None of the Arrupe students at MSFHC has missed a day of work over the past school year and none has asked to switch to another field or firm. Nicole says her position at MSFHC makes her want to learn more about the law.

"On [the television program] 'Law and Order,' I usually see angry lawyers chasing down bad guys," she says. "The attorneys I work with aren't scary and it's not so hectic at the office. They are nice and funny."

Houghtaling says the work interests the students. "They soak in a lot more than we think they do from the files that come across their desk. The students like the medical aspects of cases, but treat confidentiality with the utmost care. They don't even tell their friends or family," he says.

Nicole's work at the law firm is not interfering in any way with her schooling, either. Quite the contrary, in fact.

"At my old middle school, I was not making good grades, but I never had homework, either," Nicole says. "Now, I have tons of homework, and a 4.1 grade point average."

Houghtaling describes the experience best when he says: "It's not charity; they're good students and hard workers seizing an opportunity. We enjoy them being here."

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