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DLA Piper celebrating Women's History Month

By Maria Kantzavelos
Law Bulletin staff writer

When attorneys and other employees at DLA Piper boot up their computers at the start of each workday this month, they are bound to come face-to-face with Lady Justice.

An image of a statuette of the mythical figure is the focal point of the default wallpaper chosen to appear on the screens of computers in the firm's offices around the country in March.

The image, firm leaders said, is meant to serve as a subtle reminder that the firm has kicked off its celebration of Women's History Month — a time observed by the nation every March to honor the history, accomplishments and contributions of American women.

For DLA Piper, the celebration across the firm's U.S. offices is about "raising the consciousness and awareness of the achievements of women in the law," said Genhi Givings Bailey, the firm's Los Angeles-based senior manager for diversity and inclusion.

The effort, spearheaded by the firm's nationwide Leadership Alliance for Women affinity group, features special events in more than a dozen of the firm's offices in the United States, incorporating the firm's lawyers as well as its clients.

In the Chicago office, the chosen event marking Women's History Month are two charitable "repack nights" with clients, scheduled for March 31 and May 19 at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, where groups of volunteers are to pack items for people in need. The volunteer hours are to benefit Deborah's Place, a Chicago

homeless shelter for women, said Christina L. Martini, a partner in the Chicago office who serves on the national steering committee of DLA Piper's Leadership Alliance for Women.

Martini, along with Bailey, is among the organizers of the March initiative, which is the first time the mega-firm, as a whole, has recognized Women's History Month "with an event of this magnitude — a month-long celebration across our offices nationwide," she said.

Martini said delegates of the women's affinity group at each of the offices turned to people locally to develop their office's event.

"It's really been amazing. Each office pretty much took this project and ran with it in a way that was meaningful to them," Martini said. "What we've ended up with is a mosaic of sorts. ... These events are reflective of the personalities of the people in the offices. People have been really jazzed about what they're doing because they were really hands-on in formulating what the event would look like locally."

The celebration, Bailey said, is also "an opportunity for us to come together with our women clients who have done significant things in the law."

"We thought, what better time to engage everyone than Women's History Month. It's a global law firm, we really ought to do something that recognizes this," Bailey said.

In the Baltimore office, the chosen event is a luncheon this month featuring a keynote address by Anastasia Kelly, former general counsel at AIG, a firm client.

There have been evening receptions featuring female judges, such as the event held this month by the Phoenix office that featured a keynote address by Judge Mary Schroeder of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

And there have been book readings and signing events, like the one presented by the Houston office featuring Carla Powers, worldwide head of litigation for Royal Dutch Shell and author of "Matches in the Gas Tank."

Like the Chicago office, the firm's Los Angeles office has chosen to celebrate the month by participating in a charitable event. The office, Bailey said, is partnering with women clients in gathering commitments to participate in a "Walk for the Cure" on May 8.

And, next week in Philadelphia, an event involving the organization "Dress for Success" will have lawyers reaching out to their clients, asking them to bring an item of professional clothing or a suit to a reception, to be donated to less fortunate women who are being provided with job support and networking support by the organization, Bailey said.

"They're including a message of inspiration in the pocket of the item," Bailey said. The program, she said, is called "Suit Tales."

William A. Rudnick, managing partner of DLA Piper's Chicago office, said the move to celebrate Women's History Month as a firm is important.

"It's important to take time to honor and show respect for all the people and groups of people who make up the firm, including women."