

# Attorney Susan Asselin-Connolly Receives Citizen of the Law Award

By Barbara J. Collins and Deborah R. Eisenberg

The Connecticut Bar Association's (CBA's) Public Service Committee<sup>1</sup> has chosen Attorney Susan Asselin-Connolly as the 2008 recipient of the Citizen of the Law Award. The task of the Public Service Committee is to recognize a CBA member who has provided on a volunteer, non-income, or public relations basis significant, unselfish, and outstanding non-legal service to a charitable or public service organization to promote public health, safety, or the general welfare of society.

Asselin-Connolly volunteers approximately 40 hours per month to, among other things, assist the New London School District in reducing truancy and to help enable former abducted children to relay and resolve their abduction experiences. As a member of the New London Board of Education, she helped develop New London's Truancy Review Board to address causes of truancy among elementary school students. She also serves as the family court education coordinator for Take Root, a national non-profit organization partially funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. Take Root's mission is to empower former abducted children to respond to family abduction by facilitating, healing, providing knowledge, and raising public awareness from the perspective of the abducted child.

In addition to her work related to the Truancy Review Board and Take Root, Asselin-Connolly, a long-time advocate of children's rights, is an active member of numerous child-related community organizations, including the board of directors of the New London County Child Sexual Abuse Task Force and the Lawrence Memorial Hospital Task Force on Domestic Violence. In 2001, she received the Connecticut Department of Children and Families first annual statewide "Partners for Children" recognition award.

A principal in the firm of Asselin & Connolly Attorneys LLC of New London,

Asselin-Connolly practices family law exclusively. She often serves as a court-appointed *guardian ad litem* or attorney for minor children in divorce and custody cases, including parental abduction cases, and a special master for the Regional Family Trial Docket since the inception of the program. She is an executive committee member of the CBA's Family Law Section, a past president of the New London County Bar Association, and is the founder of and continues to serve as chair of the New London County Committee of Counsel for Children, a committee of the New London County Bar Association.

Asselin-Connolly is the co-founder of the Early Intervention Program, a superior court-assisted voluntary mediation program designed to help parents engaged in high-conflict custody disputes settle their disputes without the need for further litigation. The program, which aims to insulate children from emotional trauma that often accompanies custody litigation, pairs a seasoned family therapist and an experienced family attorney of opposite genders who work with the battling couple—on a voluntary basis—to develop a custody and parenting access plan that is in the best interest of the minor children.

Asselin-Connolly has been a member of the State of Connecticut Commission on Child Support Guidelines that last revamped the state's child support guidelines in 2005. She has also taught a course titled "Children's Rights and Public Policy" at Connecticut College and has been a guest faculty for the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada.

Award recipients for the Citizen of the Law Award must meet the following criteria:

- judge, attorney, or paralegal who is a member of the Connecticut Bar Association;
- significant contribution to a charitable or public service cause that does not



Attorney Susan Asselin-Connolly

involve professional legal skills, but provides inspiration, and contributes to the needy, the good of society, the environment, or our way of life;

- activities undertaken on a non-professional, charitable basis with little or no personal economic reward, and some personal sacrifice.

Attorney Brian D. Danforth was honored with the first Citizen of the Law Award for his service to patients and families at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and the Hole in the Wall Gang in 2004. The award was presented at the May 2004 Board of Governors meeting in New Haven. CL

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*Attorney Barbara J. Collins, a solo practitioner in Hartford, is a member of the CBA's House of Delegates and a former president of the Connecticut Bar Association. For more than 29 years, she has represented labor unions, individual employees, and multi-employer pension and health and welfare trust funds in labor and employment matters. Attorney Deborah R. Eisenberg is the principal of the firm Law Offices of Deborah R. Eisenberg LLC in Glastonbury. She practices in the areas of divorce and custody law and collaborative divorce.*

## Notes

1. Barbara J. Collins, Deborah R. Eisenberg, Jonathan W. Field, Norman K. Janes, Charles W. Pieterse, and Charles F. Wilson.