



2009-2010 Associate Board Biographies

Franco S. La Marca, Chair

Franco S. La Marca is a Wealth Manager at Morgan Stanley in downtown Chicago. A former attorney, La Marca received his law degree from John Marshall Law School, and he studied international law at the University of Sydney, in Australia. He also spent two years studying international relations at Waseda University, in Tokyo, Japan. During his time in Asia, La Marca worked as a television personality, filming segments for MTV Japan, NHK and Television Studio Alta. In 1997, he attended the official Hand-Over Ceremonies in Hong Kong, and was present at the premiere of Yo-Yo Ma's Symphony 97. He is passionate about world travel and fitness. In addition to founding the Associate Board of the Illinois Eye-Bank, Franco is a devoted supporter of other charitable causes, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation. He also sits on the alumni board for Wake Forest College, his Alma Mater.

Anthony R. Contrucci

Anthony R. Contrucci is a financier and entrepreneur, and now serves as Co-Chair of the Illinois Eye-Bank's Associate Board. He is the Managing Director of Praetorian Value Fund, LLC, a subsidiary of Arturius Capital, LLC, and is the President of C&F Holdings Group, LLC, a capital consulting and positioning company. Contrucci has always been interested in philanthropy, and is involved with charitable organizations on several levels, including board positions. He and his wife, Melissa, recently returned to the United States from living in Rome, Italy. They enjoy traveling, and split their time between Miami Beach Chicago.

Melissa Schrage Contrucci

Melissa Schrage Contrucci graduated from the University of Miami with majors in advertising and graphic design, and minors in psychology and marketing. After graduation, she continued her education, studying finance and becoming a licensed esthetician and a hearing aid specialist. Contrucci spends her time working with a variety of charities in Florida, Illinois and Indiana. She frequently assists Centier Bank, her family business, with philanthropic interests and special events, and serves on various boards and committees. She and her husband, Anthony, recently moved back to the United States after living in Rome, Italy.

Donald Hyun Kiolbassa

Donald "Don" Hyun Kiolbassa is an attorney with the law firm of Ginsparg, Bolton & Associates Ltd., and specializes in tax law, corporate law and estate planning. He has a background in public accounting, and has studied extensively throughout Asia and Latin America. Kiolbassa was also a gold medalist for the United States Chinese Martial Arts Team at the 2008 World Games. The Shaolin Monks recognized Kiolbassa's martial arts abilities, and invited him to live and train as a monk in seclusion at the Shaolin Temple in China's Henan Province. His talents also caught the attention of Hollywood, and he has done work for Walt Disney. Recently, he was signed to Warner Brothers to perform the motion capture movements for an upcoming Mortal Combat video game. Kiolbassa is active in several charitable organizations, including the Eye-Bank and Hip-Hop Chess Federation, which he co-sponsors with RZA of Wu Tang Clan.

Erin Clifford

Erin Clifford is a law student at DePaul University's College of Law. Before going to law school, she was a teacher, having earned a Bachelor's degree in secondary education with a concentration in English from Northwestern University. She began her teaching career at District 214, in the Chicago suburbs, and also taught in the Chicago Public School System. For five years, Clifford taught English at Steinmetz Academic Centre, where she was instrumental in revising the freshman and sophomore English curriculums. She was also one of the head coaches of the St. Viator Poms Program for six years, and her squads placed high in both regional and state competitions. Clifford recently worked as an extern for Chief Judge James F. Holderman, of the United States District Court's Northern District of Illinois.

Steven Rosengard

Steven Rosengard is an award-winning fashion designer and former cast member of the television program Project Runway. He studied fashion design at Columbia College and Dutch at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2004, Rosengard launched an independent fashion design house, headquartered in his native Chicago. Rosengard designs and develops custom couture gowns, day dresses and bridal wear. He also serves as Assistant Curator for Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, the largest science museum in the Western Hemisphere.

Jessa Baker

Jessa Baker is the Managing Director of Kelly Law Registry. Prior to starting her legal career, she developed life-skills programs at two underserved Chicago public schools and worked with children facing terminal illness in the United States and Ireland. As a lawyer, Baker has worked with a research firm in Minnesota, a District Attorney's office in Tennessee, a labor and employment firm in Washington, D.C. and a boutique securities law firm in Chicago. She is currently enrolled in the part-time MBA program at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. She went to law school at the University of Wisconsin and Georgetown University. Her undergraduate degree is from Vanderbilt University, and she spent her junior year abroad at Cambridge University. In addition to her involvement with the Eye-Bank, Baker serves on the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Auxiliary Board. She and her husband, CBS 2 Chicago Sports Director Ryan Baker, reside in the West Loop.

Kim Halvorsen

Kim Halvorsen is an Associate at Clifford Law Offices, where she focuses her practice on transportation, personal injury and medical malpractice. She is active in the American Bar Association, Illinois Trial Lawyers Association and the Chicago Bar Association, where she serves on the Judicial Evaluation Committee. Halvorsen is also a member of the inaugural Junior Board for Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, an organization dedicated to providing quality pro bono legal services to the working poor. She was named one of the Chicago Bar Foundation's 2009 Pro Bono Stars because of her commitment to pro bono work in Chicago's legal community. Prior to practicing law, Halvorsen worked in the Illinois legislature as a staff member for Illinois House Speaker Michael J. Madigan. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, where she majored in political science. She graduated Magna Cum Laude, Order of the Coif from DePaul University and was a member of the DePaul Law Review.

Sarah Tyler

Sarah Tyler is the Brand Manager for the Americas Products Group-Legal Division, with the Fortune 500 company Kelly Services, Inc. She went to law school at Loyola University Chicago, and earned her undergraduate degree in business administration from the University of Notre Dame, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She also completed LLM coursework in commercial real estate. Tyler supports several charities in addition to the Eye-Bank, including the American Cancer Society, Mayo Clinic Foundation, University of Notre Dame, P.A.W.S., Animal Welfare League, the ASPCA and various private rehabilitation programs benefitting the welfare of animals. She has lived in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood for more than a decade and, as a former real estate attorney, has served as an elected board member for such organizations as the 180 East Pearson Condominium Association.

Pek Pongpaet

Pek Pongpaet is an Internet entrepreneur and Lead Interactive Developer at Roundarch. He is also a Senior Martial Arts Instructor at Chicago Washu, an avid blogger, a highly sought-after speaker in Web 2.0 technologies and a prominent proponent of social media in general. As a dedicated martial artist, Pongpaet has competed internationally, performed motion-capture roles in the Mortal Kombat video game franchise and participated in live martial arts theater. He remains actively involved in the martial arts community, primarily in a teaching capacity.