

The Bar Around The Corner: Rochester Black Bar Association



Association Address / Phone:

P.O. Box 14569, Rochester, NY;
585-802-8736

Website: www.rbblaw.org

Founded: 1994

Number of Members: 100

Brief Association Vision: To address challenges minority attorneys face by creating an environment of support for minority lawyers in the Rochester community.

Brief History: In 1994, attorneys Kendel Tyre, Jr., Don M. Wade and Margaret Williams established the Rochester Black Bar Association (RBBA), an organization that would not only provide a support network for African-American lawyers in the greater Rochester community, but also tap into the resources and network of the National Bar Association (NBA). The NBA, the oldest and largest national association of predominately African-American lawyers and judges, had no affiliate chapter in Rochester at that time.

What is your association's most popular outing / social event? The Bridges to Success networking event is our most popular social event. This annual event marks the beginning of the RBBA's bar year, welcoming new members while promoting the RBBA's theme of building successful and dynamic partnerships with our friends and colleagues. The event draws a diverse cross-section of the business and legal community, including local dignitaries.

What is your association's most pressing concern regarding the legal profession? Diversity and inclusion in the bench and bar. There are no minority judges in County or Supreme Court in Monroe County. Previously, RBBA has addressed this issue by holding an informational seminar on the election process. RBBA is collaborating with the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Committee, the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA) and the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys (GRAWA) to present a CLE entitled, "Everything You Need to Know about Becoming a Judge." This comprehensive half-day CLE will detail the process of becoming a local, state or federal judge. It is scheduled for January 17 at MCBA in the Rubin Center for Education, 1 W. Main Street, 5th Floor, Rochester, New York.

What is your association's most important current project / initiative? RBBA will celebrate its 20th anniversary



Bridges to success—The RBBA's Third Annual Bridges to Success networking event honors a local judge with the "Bridge Builder Award" for their support and contributions to the association and the community and their mentorship of young attorneys. In 2013, the recipient was Hon. Rose H. Sconiers, 4th Department Appellate Division. Left to right: 2013 RBBA President Sara L. Valencia; Sconiers; and event co-chairs Josie Sheppard and Sheldon Smith.

in 2014. We have much to celebrate and our membership plans to do so by holding a gala next fall. We plan to invite founding members and highlight the tremendous accomplishments of our membership.

Final comments: RBBA is committed to collaborating with local bar associations and law firms in its programming. RBBA partnered with Nixon Peabody for the first two years of its Bridges to Success event, with the firm as the host and pri-

mary underwriter for the event. For the 2013 Bridges to Success event, Harris Beach, PLLC was the host and primary underwriter. RBBA is now collaborating with GRAWA in planning a reception to honor RBBA member Lovely Ann Warren, the first African-American female mayor of the City of Rochester. ♦

The Bar Around The Corner is a project of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, www.nyscbl.org.