

SNELL & WILMER AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS THROUGH ITS DIVERSITY PRE-LAW PROGRAM

PHOENIX (December 19, 2012) – Snell & Wilmer is pleased to announce the names of the three undergraduate students who have been selected to receive the Snell & Wilmer LSAT Scholarship, which provides selected candidates with a monetary stipend covering the costs of taking and preparing for the law school admission test.

In 2009, Snell & Wilmer established and implemented the “Snell & Wilmer Pre-Law Program” to serve self-identified diverse undergraduate students. The hallmark of the Program is the LSAT Scholarship. Through the Committee on Diversity & Inclusion, Snell & Wilmer recently awarded three LSAT Scholarships to individuals interested in attending law school. The recipients selected to receive the Snell & Wilmer LSAT Scholarship are Sheraya Barajas-Brown, Michael Picasso and Ernesto Valencia.

- **Sheraya Barajas-Brown** - Sheraya’s childhood was filled with physical, sexual and mental abuse by foster care parents. She took responsibility for her future. “I learned there would be no handouts. . . . I knew that the only way to escape the cycle of poverty and abuse in my family was to get an education.” Sheraya wants to be a leader within her community and believes her multi-cultural background will enrich her contributions. “I know the amazing motivation that can bloom from the ashes of suffering; and I know the positive effect I can make with my diverse background.” Sheraya is a graduate of Southern Utah University.
- **Michael Picasso** - As a child, Michael remembers feeling confused that some of the closest people in his life were referred to as “illegal.” For Michael, “illegal” meant “bad” yet those people with whom he was close with were “good.” As a result, Michael struggled to reconcile his love for these important people with the stigma associated with the label “illegal.” Those thoughts always stuck with him and inspired him to attend law school so that he could develop a better understanding of the legal system. He is hopeful to assist those who do not have access to the legal community and looks forward to a career in public interest law. Michael is a graduate of Stanford University.
- **Ernesto Valencia** - Ernesto grew up in foster homes and is a child abuse survivor. According to Ernesto, he “overcame the viscous cycle of gangs, drugs and alcohol abuse, and incarceration that all started at the age of twelve.” Ernesto eventually received his GED and worked in construction for twenty-five years until he was injured and unable to continue working. As a result, he then enrolled in college and received his Paralegal certificate, graduating *magna cum laude* from Arizona State University, which has had a positive influence on his life and family: “After becoming aware of the setbacks I had and how I am overcoming them through higher education, [Ernesto’s sons] have become encouraged to continue their education.” Ernesto hopes to one day be able to pay for his sons’ education expenses. He is proud that one son has decided to go back to college, another son serves in the Army and that his wife is now pursuing a degree of her own. He is hopeful to continue inspiring his family.

About Snell & Wilmer L.L.P.

Founded in 1938, Snell & Wilmer is a full-service business law firm with more than 400 attorneys practicing in nine locations throughout the western United States and in Mexico, including Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles and Orange County, California; Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Los Cabos, Mexico. The firm represents clients ranging from large, publicly traded corporations to small businesses, individuals and entrepreneurs. For more information, visit www.swlaw.com.