

Rackliffe tapped to serve on Steel Yard's board

People in the News Q&A

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Benjamin L. Rackliffe, an associate at Pannone Lopes Devereaux & West LLC, was recently elected to serve on the board of directors for the Steel Yard. At PLDW, Rackliffe's practice focuses on health care, nonprofit and tax-exempt organizations and he is also a participating attorney and advisory board member of the Roger Williams University Pro Bono Collaborative. For the past two years, Rackliffe was named a Rhode Island Rising Star by Thomson Reuters. He shares this distinction with less than 2.5 percent of Rhode Island lawyers who are younger than 40 and have been in practice for less than 10 years. Rackliffe holds a B.S. in business management from Providence College and a J.D. from Roger Williams University School of Law.

PBN: What made you choose to join the Steel Yard's board of directors?

RACKLIFFE: The Steel Yard is one of the most unique nonprofits I have come across. To have this vibrant and programmatically diverse organization, located at the historic Providence Steel and Iron site, emphasizing arts and culture, career-oriented training and small-business incubation is really something special. In my mind, it's the type of organization that the city should continue to foster.

PBN: Could you discuss the Pro Bono Collaborative at RWU.

RACKLIFFE: The University's Pro Bono Collaborative serves people [with low incomes] in need of pro bono legal services. In a typical scenario, university personnel will vet prospective projects and (for those that qualify) pair law students with practitioners to see projects through to completion. As a participant, many of my firm's pro bono projects through the collaborative are concerned with the formation of nonprofit organizations, as well as completing and filing applications for tax-exempt status with the federal government. RWU Law students, under attorney oversight, play an important role in the formation and application process during these projects.

PBN: Have you noticed any trends in the nonprofit industry?

RACKLIFFE: The downturn in the economy beginning in 2007 triggered a noticeable reduction in donations and available grant monies for many nonprofits. Donors and foundations alike have had to become more selective when deciding which organizations to support in order to weather tough economic times. As a result, many nonprofits have had to look to new efficiency-centric ways to deliver programs and services to their communities. Collaboration among nonprofits, where organizations pool administrative and programmatic resources, has been an increasing trend with many success stories. It's a trend I expect will continue even as the economy continues to recover. •