

Appleseed This Week

Mexico's First Lady Speaks at Mexico Appleseed Event, Encourages Nationwide Pro Bono Network

February 1, 2008 - On Monday **Mexico Appleseed** held its second annual event, which was a call to action for attorneys to engage in pro bono work in Mexico. The event's keynote speaker was **Margarita Zavala**, first lady of Mexico and president of the **Consejo Ciudadano Consultivo** of Mexico City.

The event, which was held in coordination with the **National Association of Corporate Lawyers** (ANADE) and the **Universidad Panamericana**, received widespread media coverage, including a prominent piece on **Televisa**. Numerous distinguished attorneys from Mexico's most prestigious firms attended the event and reiterated the need for a pro bono culture in Mexico.



Margarita Zavala, first lady of Mexico, speaks at Mexico Appleseed event

Says **Maru Cortazar**, executive director of Mexico Appleseed, "Appleseed, ANADE and the Universidad Panamericana, founders of the **Mexican Pro Bono Network**, are creating a synergy of efforts among the private, public and social sectors to give back to the community. This strategic partnership will allow the network to take on broad issues of systemic and legislative concern, as well as provide direct legal assistance to low-income individuals."

Margarita Zavala kicked off the event with an inspirational speech to motivate the entire legal community to use its problem-solving skills to give back to the public good. The first lady insisted that there is no better way than through their professional expertise to do so.

Robert Herzstein and **Eric Koenig**, both board members of the national office of Appleseed, provided an overview of the growing importance of pro bono work within the U.S. legal culture throughout the last century, providing Mexican leaders with benchmarks and tools for further establishing this culture in Mexico.

Luis Gómez Sánchez, a board member of both Mexico Appleseed and the **Executive Council of Global Enterprise**, highlighted the influence that social responsibility has in global enterprise, and noted that law firms should trust that their global clients will honor and respect their pro bono efforts to give back to marginal communities. Attorneys **Carlos Ortiz Mena**, **Alexis Rovzar**, **Gustavo Alanis**, **Susan Grisso de Ortega** and **José Antonio Lozano Díez** presented the details of solidifying a pro bono commitment within firms, and establishing both individual and firm obligation to the Mexican Pro Bono Network, which is essential in creating the necessary professionalism that results in high-quality, timely legal analysis of problems. The Mexican Pro Bono Network has created a website to address these issues, allowing lawyers to track their time commitment to pro bono work and assisting firms in documenting their associates' dedication to the cause.

Claus Von Wobeser of **Von Wobeser y Sierra** spoke about the importance of the **Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas**, paying particular attention to the virtue of instituting a formal commitment within law firms to do pro bono work. The spirit of the declaration is to extend the social obligation of lawyers through the whole legal field, to all specializations. The Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas will be formally presented and signed at the International Bar Association meeting this month in Mexico City.

For more information on Appleseed, visit www.appleseednetwork.org. To support the work of Appleseed, donate [here](#).

Appleseed, a non-partisan and non-profit organization, is a network of public interest law Centers working to identify and address injustices in their communities. Appleseed works to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise, addressing root causes and producing practical solutions. As one of the nation's largest legal pro bono networks, Appleseed Centers work both independently and collectively, bringing their own experiences to create local solutions that are nationally relevant. We connect the top private practice lawyers, corporate counsel, law schools, civic leaders, and other professionals to tackle problems locally, at their root cause.