

## 2021 Earl G. Harrison Pro Bono Award Tammy Mazzatenta & Barbara Schramm



Tammy Mazzatenta and Barbara Schramm, paralegals in the Litigation Department, are being honored by the Firm with the 2021 Earl G. Harrison Pro Bono Award. This award is presented annually to an attorney or paralegal who has a distinguished record of pro bono service of enduring value to the public good.

Mazzatenta and Schramm have demonstrated initiative, commitment and effectiveness in sustaining Schnader's proud tradition of pro bono service which traces its roots to the founding of the Firm in 1935. Their pro bono participation and leadership in the Expungement Clinic Program of Face to Face Germantown have benefited hundreds of individuals.

"Barbara and Tammy truly represent the higher calling of the law with their pro bono efforts in helping individuals who could not otherwise access or afford legal representation to clear their criminal records," said Stephen A. Fogdall, Chair of the Firm's Pro Bono Committee and Co-Chair of the Financial Services Litigation Practice Group.

Face to Face Germantown holds periodic Expungement Clinics to clear the criminal records of individuals with charges that did not result in conviction. This includes dismissed, withdrawn, nolle prossed and not guilty charges; the completion of special programs such as Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) and the Small Amount of Marijuana Program; and summary-level convictions followed by five years free of arrest or prosecution. Expunging these criminal records can remove barriers that prevent people from obtaining housing and employment.

For over two years, including during the pandemic, Mazzatenta and Schramm have assisted with over 300 successful expungement petitions. The process is complicated, involving collecting the required information and documents, completing the petition for expungement, following the process through a court hearing, and then filing various documents with multiple agencies.

Mazzatenta and Schramm do most of their Expungement Clinic work "behind the scenes," double checking the petitions and related records, communicating about court dates, and filing documents. This pro bono work usually leads to partial or total expungement of the person's criminal record and can change someone's life by opening up options for housing and employment that most of us take for granted.

Mazzatenta and Schramm have also assisted in other pro bono matters at Schnader, especially with pre-trial preparation. Schramm participated in the Firm's work to successfully overturn the wrongful conviction and imprisonment of Anthony Wright, who had served 22 years in prison.

They find their expungement efforts for Face to Face Germantown to be both impactful and inspiring, and they hope others will also become involved in this ongoing and important pro bono project. (Give them a call!) In doing this work, they are always encouraged by the collaborative efforts of many volunteers, law firms, and public officials who want to help. "It is so rewarding to help those who need it and see that you played a role in their lives," said Schramm. Mazzatenta hopes that "others can see the value in this work and say 'I can help' to pay it forward for those who really need a hand."