

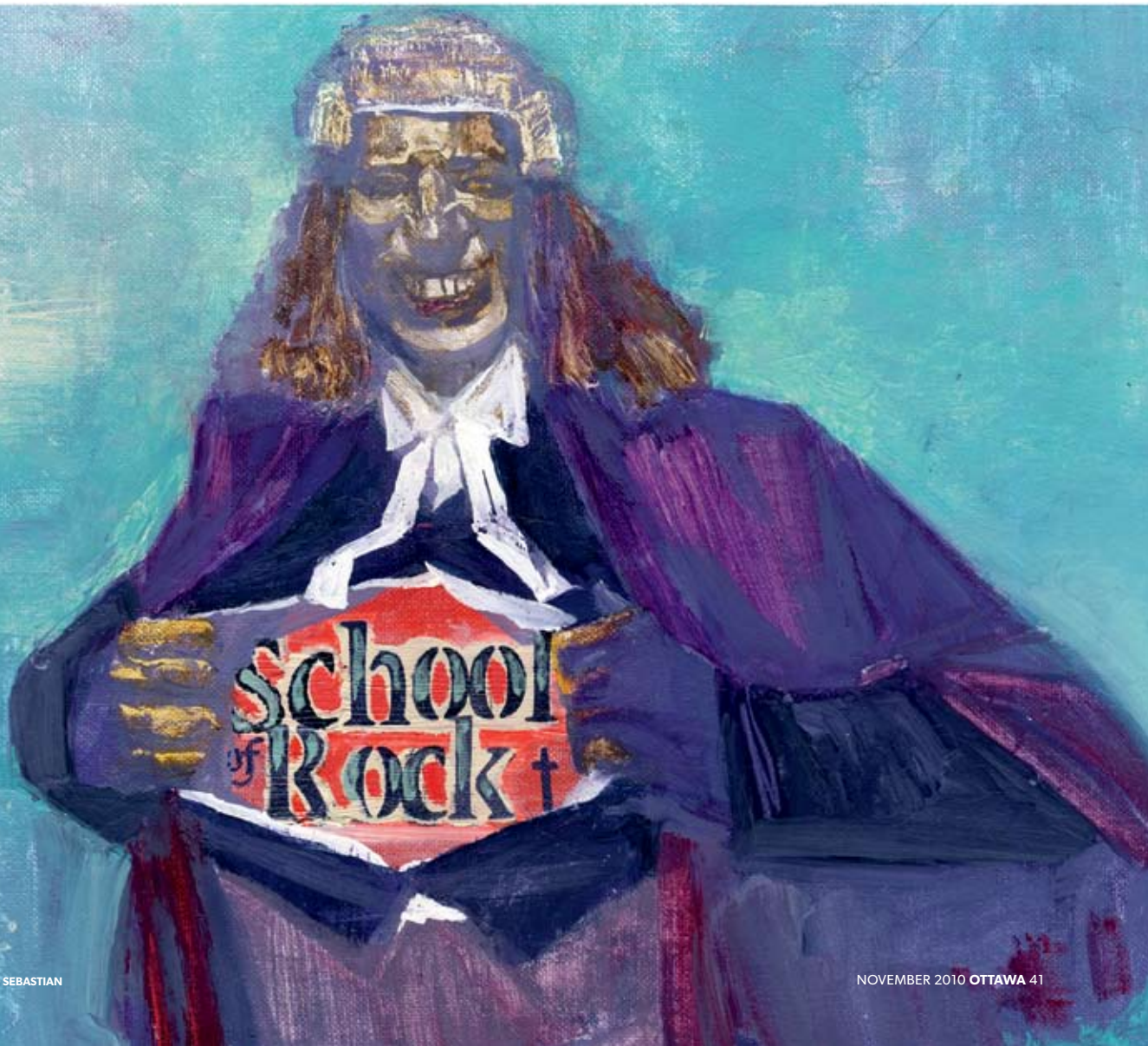
THEY'RE OFTEN CHARACTERIZED AS RICH AND RUTHLESS, A STEREOTYPE THAT'S REINFORCED BY THE MEDIA. IN REALITY, LAWYERS TEND TO BE THE FIRST TO OPEN THEIR CHEQUEBOOKS DURING FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS. **MARK BOURRIE** LOOKS AT HOW LOCAL LAWYERS ARE COMBINING FUN AND PHILANTHROPY

The Good Lawyer

The song is like Crazy Glue. Nine months after a hot little funk band belted it out at the Capital Music Hall on a cold February night, "Give Up the Funk" still rattles around the brain. The Soul Practitioners, a band of professional-quality musicians fronted by two beautiful young women, belted it out halfway through one of the year's better parties — a battle of local bands. The hall was jam-packed with a mix of sharply dressed students and middle-aged white-collar types who all seemed to know one another. It was the type of crowd that didn't scrimp on booze, liked to dance, and stayed late.

"Give Up the Funk" is a tune first recorded by the band Parliament, but that night it was being performed by civil litigators, labour lawyers, and a guy who writes laws for a living. The Capital Music Hall was hosting Lawzfest in the loft-like cavern just behind the Honest Lawyer restaurant in the ByWard Market. The party drew about 400 people in the dead of winter to raise money for the Ottawa Food Bank.

It all started about four years ago when Andrew Lenz and other musically inclined Ottawa lawyers started talking about the need to put on a fun, high-quality show that would rally their



colleagues in support of a good cause. Superior Court of Justice judge Robert Beaudoin, then a court official, already organized a week in support of the Ottawa Food Bank that saw legal professionals donate time and non-perishables. Lenz and his team piggybacked on the momentum of Beaudoin's fundraiser to raise cash for the food bank. (Because the organization has wholesale agreements with grocers, donated cash goes a long way.) Lenz, who has been playing in bands for years, made three phone calls and, within 15 minutes, had booked five bands for the Rainbow Room concert. A tradition had begun.

bid on the same artwork, but instead of dollars they offer up volunteer hours at partner charities. When the hours are complete, the law firms give the artworks to the volunteers as a token of thanks. Then there's the downtown firm Kelly Santini, which organizes a popular breakfast for the Special Olympics, raising money for athletes with mental disabilities.

Other lawyers have moulded pre-law dreams of stardom into fundraising tools. Michael Crystal did stand-up comedy at Yuk Yuk's to help fund his undergrad studies at Dalhousie University in the 1980s. He then used the skills that he had

ONE THING THAT LAWYERS SEEM TO LOVE IS THE SPOTLIGHT. ORGANIZE A BAND NIGHT, COMEDY CABARET, OR THEATRICAL EVENT, AND THE EXTROVERTS COME FORWARD

Last February's Lawzfest lineup included Perley-Jam from Perley-Robertson, Hill & McDougall; Soul Practitioners from Nelligan O'Brien; the Ben Duchesne Quartet from Heenan Blaikie; The Hung Jury from Gowlings; a band called The Verdict, made up of lawyers from various firms around town; and Comma, Supra from the Department of Justice. Their "battle" raised some \$10,000 for the Ottawa Food Bank, which translates into more than \$50,000 worth of food. They'll be doing it again next February.

In the first week of August 2007, *Maclean's* magazine, in a bid to generate some controversy, ran a cover story declaring Lawyers Are Rats. It was thin gruel, based on *Lawyers Gone Bad: Money, Sex and Madness in Canada's Legal Profession*, a book written by lawyer-commentator Philip Slayton that detailed some of the less savoury practices of some lawyers and law firms. Only a few readers complained about the cover, with most of the squawking coming from lawyers. What *Maclean's* and other lawyer bashers who helped hype the book didn't bother to mention was that lawyers tend to be the first people to open their chequebooks during charity fundraising campaigns. And without their volunteer energy, many of the city's charities would wither or would never have started at all.

On the third Wednesday of each month, about 20 lawyers wait on tables in the Ottawa Mission, serving a restaurant-quality meal to more than 500 people at an event called Lawyers Feed the Hungry. For two hours, people file through the old building on Waller Street, sitting down to a meal of prime rib, baked potatoes, vegetables, pop, pies, and cakes. The monthly dinners started in April. Jon Richardson, who organizes them with fellow lawyer Ian Stauffer, saw that Toronto lawyers had been running a food program in Toronto since 1999. The two Ottawa lawyers decided to bring the idea to this city and asked for help from the Law Society Foundation, which can issue charitable tax receipts. All the money needed to put on the meals — about \$16,000 so far — has come from donations from lawyers. "It's the right thing to do," says Richardson. "We wanted to expand the program to Ottawa because there is a need here for it. This is a great chance for lawyers to show they don't adhere to the stereotype. This is a chance to give back."

Another lawyer-sponsored fundraiser in the city is Time-raiser, part of a cross-Canada series of events that sees law firms bid on and buy original art. Young professionals then

sharpened in front of sometimes tough audiences, and his connection with Yuk Yuk's, to help create a comedy night last February that raised about \$30,000 for Reach Canada, an organization that draws on the skills of 200 local lawyers and law students who donate their time to advocate for the disabled. In the lobby of the auditorium of Library and Archives Canada, law professor Ed Ratushny and his jazz band set the mood for a cocktail party, while inside, lawyers from the city and the federal government put on a series of skits that poked fun at lawyers' work, their often overwhelming hours, and the rigidities of their workplace. The highlight of the event was a Gilbert and Sullivan-style rendition of *Trial by Jury* by newly minted judge Beaudoin, who, dressed in legal robes and a waist-length wig, recited a racy poem detailing a Dickensian career as a law clerk and junior lawyer who rose through the legal profession by the simple expedient of marrying his boss's homely daughter. Blind comic and motivational speaker Gordon Paynter carried the second half of the show with a stand-up act.

Crystal says he is already hard at work crafting a second Lawyers Comedy Night. "Right now we're already well on our way. We're doing a song with judges singing a chorus called 'That's Judgitus' to the tune of 'That's Amore.'" Between now and the February 1 event, the lawyers involved will meet at Yuk Yuk's, when the club is not active, to work on their choreography. Those who are doing stand-up will use the club as a testing ground on amateur and open-mike nights.

Crystal also helped raise \$16,000 for Guatemala disaster relief after meeting the Guatemalan ambassador to Canada, Georges de La Roche, and his wife, Alice, in early 2010 while Crystal was honorary counsel for the United Nations Association in Canada. He is also a volunteer fundraiser for the Hanne Howard Fund, an organization that raises money to send orphaned and vulnerable children in Kenya to school. In February, he will celebrate his 50th birthday by doing a stand-up act at Yuk Yuk's with the aim of raising enough money to send 50 Kenyan kids to school.

"Lawyers' hours are long and the work is very intense," Crystal explains. "You get to help people who are wronged. You get to make a difference. We are around so much negativity. You see some of the worst in people when you're involved in criminal, family, even employment law. Quite often we deal with people whose lives have been turned upside down, who are in misery. To be able to do something that is just fun and positive is great."

Then there's lawyer-about-town Lawrence Greenspon, who defends accused people in some of the city's highest-profile criminal and terrorism cases by day and by night is well known around town as a celebrity auctioneer and MC, showing up at dozens of events each year. Among other initiatives, Greenspon volunteers time with Reach, working on an art auction that was held on October 28 and on the Minto Run for Reach. He has also been on the board of the Snowsuit Fund for 25 years. "I love the people and I love the work they do," he comments simply.

During an interview just after a charity golf tournament, Greenspon elaborated on the commitment of his profession. "Lawyers give to the community disproportionate to any other occupation or profession. I challenge anyone to find any profession that does more. Almost every charity in the city was started by a lawyer, or lawyers were instrumental in getting it started. Lawyers are trained to help people. It's no surprise that they do so much charity work, because they are simply doing what they do on a day-to-day basis."

Indeed, many lawyers start charitable work as students or early in their careers. Pro Bono Students Canada, which has a chapter at the University of Ottawa law school, is a country-wide association that matches law students with lawyers who are interested in working on social-justice issues. "Students in law schools are already taking on free work with groups, so it's no surprise when they continue to do this kind of work after they graduate," Greenspon says.

One thing that lawyers seem to love is the spotlight. Organize a band night, comedy cabaret, or theatrical event, and the extroverts come forward. Every spring for 11 years, a group of

lawyers has organized a fundraiser called the Lawyer Play that raises money for the Great Canadian Theatre Company and at least one other cause. (The charity recipient changes every year.) Lawyers have raised more than \$750,000 over the past decade; their generosity is commemorated by a plaque on the wall of the new GCTC building on Wellington Street.

Ian Stauffer, a partner with Tierney Stauffer, has been involved from the start, even writing the actual play in 2009. "We deal every day with people who have problems," Stauffer says. "We are not in an ivory tower where we have an above-the-crowd mentality. Even in the bigger firms, we work in the trenches. We see the problems caused by poverty, and we know that a lot of the issues we see are caused by financial problems or ignorance caused by a lack of education. When I was young, lawyers were seen as an elite group who were rich and who didn't have a lot of contact with people who were not lawyers." Now, he says, lawyers have a stronger connection to the community. "We are not a collective. Some lawyers do more than others when it comes to volunteering, but almost all of them donate money."

To recognize the volunteer and fundraising work of the city's lawyers, members of the County of Carleton Law Association in 1991 created the Gordon F. Henderson Award, given each year to a member of their association who has made an outstanding contribution to the community through charitable work. Members of the CCLA choose a winner each year from a list of nominees submitted by city charities. Competition for the award, which includes a \$1,000 donation to a charity, is as fierce as any courtroom battle.

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