

Reality Check

How do we want young people to view our industry? Are we happy with their learning about us from the Hollywood version of greedy, heartless, old men denying desperate people from just compensation? Do we want tomorrow's hopes to view us as surrounded by legions of high-paid, well-dressed lawyers overwhelming the helpless? Or how about the political version painting insurance companies as untrustworthy and unable to do the right thing unless under constant and aggressive oversight?

Not surprisingly young people do not dream about a future in the insurance business.

Neither did we. For most of us insurance was not likely on our list of choice careers, and many came to it by circumstance or outright accident. But once exposed to the business, we came to realize how insurance touches practically every endeavor and all aspects of life and its struggles. More importantly, we find that the insurance business is populated by many caring, intelligent, motivated human beings and not by automatons and androids. Sure, as in every business, we have our bad players, but if your exposure to our business is solely the Hollywood or politically expedient version, we are all bad players.

Mitigating these attitudes is admittedly a Herculean task, and many in our business consider it more a fools pursuit -- more Don Quixote than Hercules -- shrugging off stereotypical perceptions as part of life that simply cannot be changed. Fortunately, however, we have a number of colleagues willing to show the expertise and talent involved in all aspects of our business while not shying away from showing our humanity as well. Take for example the extraordinary internship effort by the Insurance Federation of New York in partnership with the charitable organization Yes!Solutions.

The Insurance Federation of New York, Inc. (IFNY) is an organization whose

members represent a diverse group of insurance professionals that, according to its website, "serves the men and women in our industry by providing them with a forum for discussion of the legislative and regulatory matters that most affect the success of their enterprises in the City and State of New York." I am a member myself, as are many of my colleagues, and most of us consider that IFNY's greater purpose is to throw killer networking events -- several breakfast meetings throughout the year and one awesome luncheon in the fall. Last year, however, under the leadership of its current president, Nick Pearson, an insurance partner at the Edwards Wildman Palmer law firm in Manhattan, IFNY spread its wings and undertook sponsorship of an amazing program -- IFNY Interns.

Under the inaugural program last summer, six motivated high school students from extremely difficult backgrounds and circumstances, were exposed to the working environment and people at participating insurance companies and professional firms over an eight-week period. The effort brought to the program by participating companies was impressive,

continued on page 8



Peter H. Bickford



NICK PEARSON, IFNY PRESIDENT



MARY LANNING, YES!SOLUTIONS, INC.



RACHEL CASTRO, DEAN OF GIRLS, BOYS HOPE GIRLS HOPE NY; BRAD ZERVAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BHGH-NY; EMELY ROMAN, BROOKLYN, IFNY INTERN; MARY LANNING, PRESIDENT, YES!SOLUTIONS; PATRIA ANANO, BRONX, IFNY INTERN; JOHN J. HALLERON, CHAIR, BHGHNY; STEPHAN PEMBERTON, BRONX, IFNY INTERN; GOVERNOR DIRK KEMPTHORNE; DAVONE MCCORD, BROOKLYN, IFNY INTERN; MALICK FALL, CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, BHGHNY; JEAN-YVES LAFOND, DEAN OF BOYS, BHGHNY - MISSING: MARIAMA BARRY (BRONX) AND STEVE VASQUEZ (BRONX), IFNY INTERNS

**We want
to buy your
Agency if
you want to
sell!**

**Looking to retire
and pass the torch
to a company who
cares about your
clients?**

**We have a strong track
record, excellent mar-
kets, a powerful cen-
tralized staff, the
capital, the expertise,
and the blueprints
for building well into
the future while
keeping your clients
our TOP priority.**

**Give us a call
today
and speak to
Kevin
848.863.7105
kevinkkins@gmail.com**

**KK Insurance
Neptune, New Jersey**

[INSIGHT]

continued from page 6

and was matched by the enthusiasm and involvement of the interns. The effect on both groups -- interns and industry mentors -- was remarkably similar, with everyone taking away a deeper appreciation of the other. That IFNY is pursuing the program again this year is a tribute to the program's success for both the students and the professionals, and portends the growth of a tradition that will not only help disadvantage young people understand their potential in the world, but will also more fully define the insurance industry to future generations.

It is said that the most important person in establishing a trend is the first one to follow. That would be what IFNY has accomplished with its support. But the ELNY role is only half the story. The other half is the extraordinary Mary Lanning!

For those few in the industry who do not know her, Mary is an accomplished insurance professional with over 40 years in the business. After stints at Skandia America Reinsurance Company and Johnson & Higgins (remember them?) She was the executive director of the Insurance Brokers' Association of the State of New York for eight years before establishing her own lobbying and consulting firm, ML & G Associates. For the past two decades Mary has been one of the most effective insurance lobbyists, particularly on brokerage, distribution and regulatory issues. Walking through the halls of political Albany with Mary is a life experience -- and seems to take just as long. Everyone knows Mary and stops to talk to her (or vice-versa) -- from the heads of government, to their staffs, to the workers in the lobby shops, and to any other lost soul nearby. Oh yes, did I mention that Mary is also a nun?

Elizabeth Taylor once purportedly said: "The problem with people who have no vices is that generally you can be pretty sure they're going to have some pretty annoying virtues." She must have known Mary!

During Mary's entire insurance career she has been a member of the service-oriented Sisters for Christian Community after having spent 13-years in a Dominican monastery. In this parallel life Mary has tirelessly served the homeless and people from all walks of life in need of counseling on life or end-of-life matters. It is Mary,

"The problem with people who have no vices is that generally you can be pretty sure they're going to have some pretty annoying virtues."

through her Yes!Solutions, Inc. charitable organization, that developed the intern program, developed the relationship with Boys Hope Girls Hope, the charitable organization that provides safe haven for the displaced, abused or abandoned children from whose ranks the interns have been chosen, and brought IFNY into the picture as the program's sponsor. It is Mary who escorted the interns from assignment to assignment throughout the internship period, and monitored assessments and reports on the experiences of interns and mentors alike. And it is Mary who cajoled and prodded industry leaders to participate. Even the most reluctant participant, however, came to appreciate the interaction with the interns and to share their life experiences. In other words, without Mary's incessant involvement, tutoring and leadership, there would not have been a program for IFNY and its members to support.

Aside from providing the students with essential life lessons and exposures, the IFNY Intern Program provides a demystifying benefit to the insurance industry -- exposing young people to how the industry affects all aspects of life and how it really works. When these remarkable youth go on to become productive adults in whatever field they choose, it is hoped that the life lessons learned from the IFNY Intern Program will follow them forever! Kudos to IFNY, Yes!Solutions, Inc. and Sister Mary for opening these doors!^[A]

[For more information on the IFNY Intern Program including information on how you can help, go to the IFNY website at www.ifny.org or email Gina Marie Balog at ifny@cinn.com. For more information on Boys Hope Girls Hope, go to its website at www.boyshopegirlshope.org. I have also posted a 2002 Business Insurance bio on Mary Lanning on my blog at www.pbny-law.com/insurance-ioi/ for any reader interested in learning more about this singularly annoying woman.]