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Firm honors past leader with scholarship

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By John Flynn Rooney

John W. Daniels Jr. expected to attend a routine partners meeting at Quarles & Brady LLP earlier this month.

But his colleagues caught Daniels, now the firm's chairman emeritus, unaware.

At the meeting 10 days ago, firm officials announced they had created a scholarship fund in Daniels' name to assist minority law students.

The scholarship fund through the American Bar Association's Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund now has \$103,000 in it and is expected to take in more money going forward.

"I was as surprised as I could be," said Daniels, who is based in the firm's Milwaukee office.

"As someone who has seen the benefits of bringing different people into the profession, this (scholarship fund) is important because it will increase the talent pool for everyone from corporate law to public service," he said.

Kimberly Leach Johnson, the firm's new chairperson, said Daniels' colleagues wanted to honor him because he's a champion of diversity.

"He gives a lot back, especially in the Milwaukee area, to help minorities," Johnson said, adding that Daniels hosts a golf outing annually and donates the proceeds to various nonprofit groups that support educational opportunities for minority children.

About three months ago, the firm formed a committee to create a tribute to Daniels. They also sent an e-mail to firm lawyers, clients and friends alerting them to the scholarship fund.

At the partners' meeting in Milwaukee, Daniels was informed that the firm contributed \$45,000 for a scholarship fund in his name.

The same evening, the firm hosted a cocktail reception for Daniels at The Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee, attended by about 160 people. At that event, Daniels learned the scholarship fund was at more than \$100,000.

"We saved the big news for the night event," Johnson said.

Two clients of Daniels donated \$25,000 each for the scholarship fund and his law firm colleagues and friends contributed the rest, Johnson said.

Daniels' affiliation with the ABA began in the early 1970s when he was a student at Harvard Law School. He was elected national vice president of the ABA's Law Student Division and he later served as national secretary of the association's Section of Real Property, Trust and Estate Law.



John W. Daniels Jr.

The ABA has demonstrated a commitment to making the legal profession more open to diversity, Daniels said.

“So, this effort to continue that goal is very important,” he said. “Whatever I can do to support that, I’m all for.”

The ABA’s Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund provides 20 incoming diverse law students with \$15,000 in assistance during their three years in law school.

Daniels said he does not know if any of the scholarship fund money in his name will go to students in the Chicago area. As chairman, he spent a significant amount of time in the firm’s Chicago office.

“During that time, I had a chance to interact with students from various law schools in the Chicago region,” Daniels said. “So, I know this scholarship fund is important” to local law students.