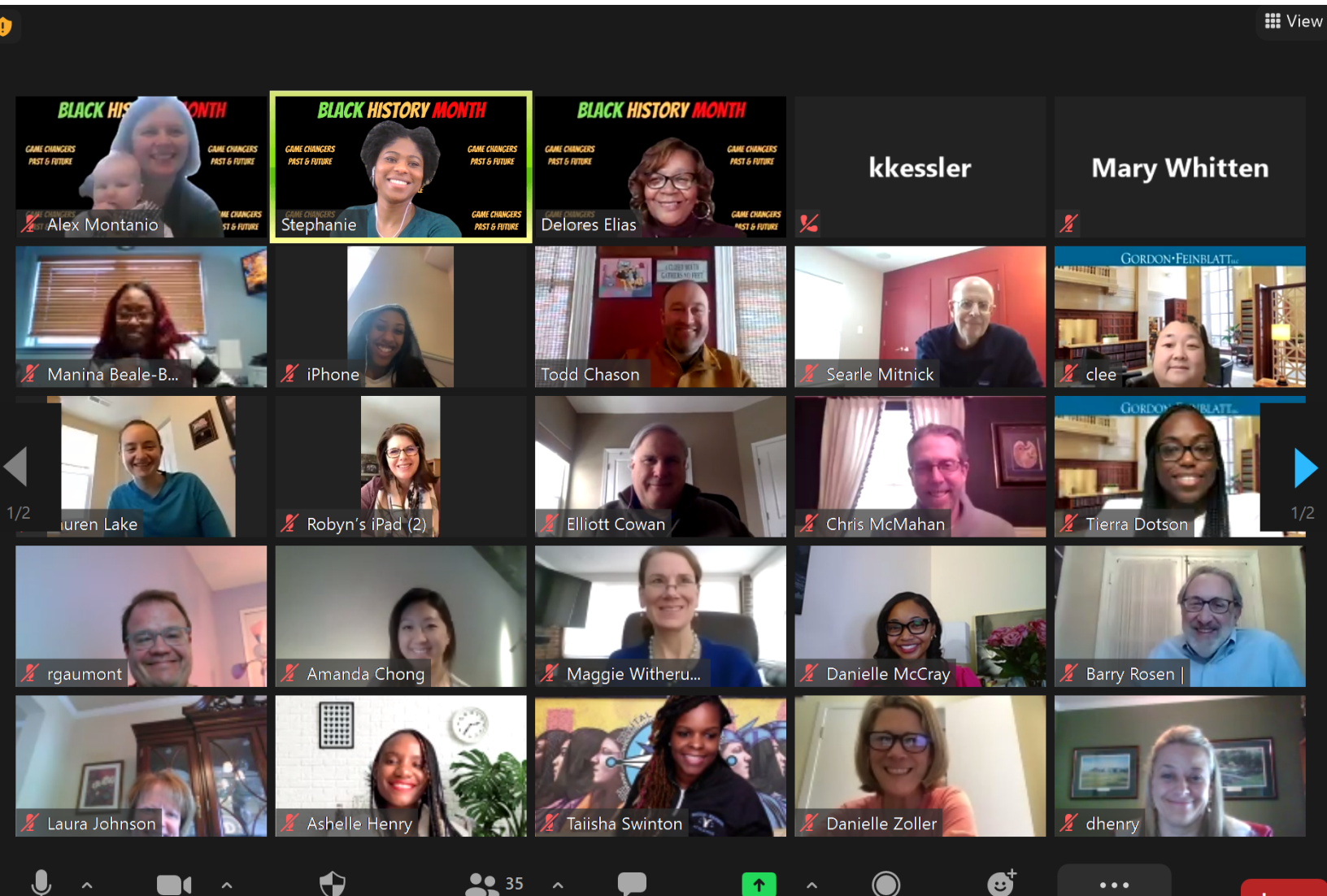




# FY21 REPORT



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*Front Cover: Members of the Firm celebrate the 3rd Annual Black History Month Gamechangers Essay Contest with educators and students from Baltimore City Public School's Digital Harbor High School.*

# OUR HERITAGE

## A Tradition of CSR

Though FY21 was a year unlike any other in Gordon Feinblatt LLC's 68 year history, shaped by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, fully remote operations and the sale of our historic home on Redwood Street, the Firm's commitment to serving the community and being collegial colleagues remained steadfast.

When Eugene Feinblatt co-founded the Firm in 1953, he likely could not have imagined a world where the practice of law took place virtually, with frequent guest appearances by children and pets in our living rooms, kitchen islands and home offices. However, we hope that despite the change of setting, the Firm's dedication to the community would have felt familiar to him.



*Above: Eugene Feinblatt (left leaning forward) served as a close advisor to Baltimore Mayor Thomas D'Alessandro III (far left) during a period of great social change in 1968.*

Mr. Feinblatt, the son of a school teacher and social worker, moved to Baltimore as a child during the Great Depression. Growing up, his dinner table conversations about the issues of the day fostered an enduring passion for addressing social challenges. That passion endures in our Firm today. Our approximately 130 personnel recognized that the pandemic and ongoing national conversations about social justice issues only heightened our responsibility to be good neighbors to the community and good colleagues to each other. As we have adapted to the rapidly changing environment, we have sought solace by anchoring ourselves to the relationships, organizations, and causes that needed us most. It was these connections, and the promise of a bright future in a new office space thoughtfully designed to foster these relationships, that got us through these challenging times.

# CSR AT GORDON FEINBLATT

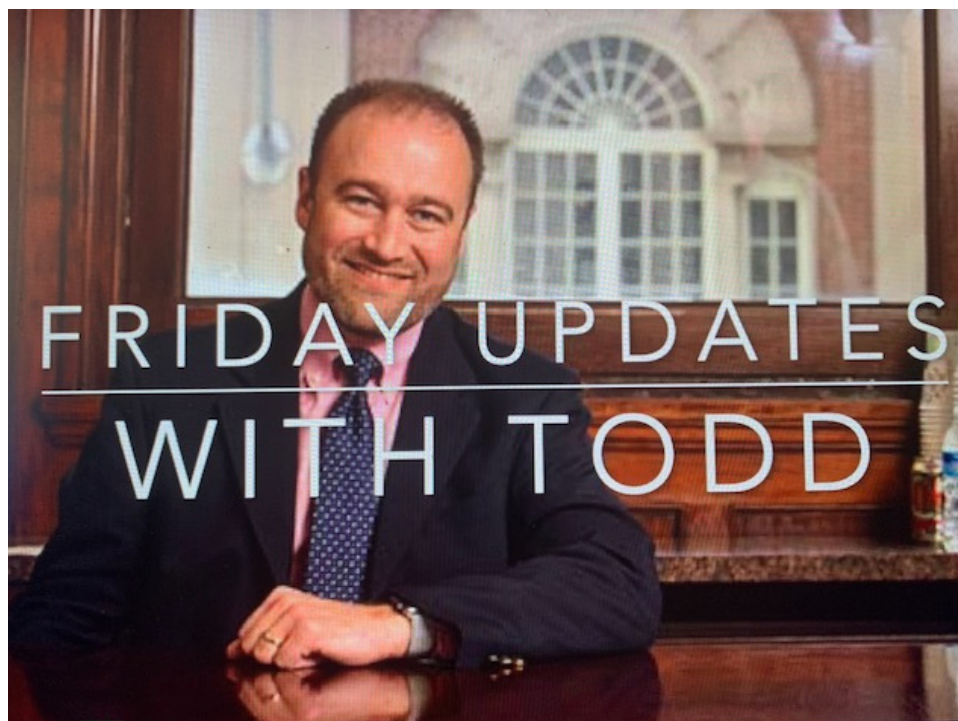
## Expanding our Reach

In 2017, the Firm reaffirmed its commitment to diversity and inclusion by structuring a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. A year later, recognizing that the Firm's support for a wide array of community events and causes required its own dedicated stewards, the Firm created a Community Engagement Commitment.

Soon after, plans to relocate the Firm to new office space began developing. This allowed us to think strategically about our environmental impact, with an opportunity to build on our existing sustainability practices. As part of this effort, the Firm launched the Green Team to champion environmental policy and programming in October 2020.

The Firm also recognized that the core of our business, and our corporate social responsibility programming, is the people who comprise our excellent team. In the Spring of 2021, we launched a new affinity group for people of color to build a dedicated space for our colleagues to discuss topics of interest, participate in programming, and find commonalities to celebrate.

Similarly, though we operated remotely, we continued to prioritize inclusion. It became tradition that new hires were welcomed on our internal video series "Friday Updates with Todd" where our



managing partner, Todd Chason, delivered all the news on the building move and recognized personnel milestones. An informal production team spanning many of our departments delivered funny and informative segments to keep everyone feeling connected as we waited to safely gather together in person again.

*Left: The final screen shot of the opening credits of "Friday Updates with Todd" which include a full parody of the intro from the sitcom "The Office."*

# CSR AT GORDON FEINBLATT

**"Corporate social responsibility is measured in terms of businesses improving conditions for their employees, shareholders, communities, and environment. But moral responsibility goes further, reflecting the need for corporations to address fundamental ethical issues such as inclusion, dignity, and equality."**

**Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum.**

Gordon Feinblatt's Corporate Social Responsibility efforts embraces this call to action by focusing on three interconnected areas: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Community Engagement, and Sustainability. We aim to deliver a wide array of employee driven programming throughout the year.



# YEAR AT A GLANCE

## 45

### EPISODES

of Friday Updates with Todd

## 130

### GIFTCARDS

given to every teacher and staff member at Digital Harbor High School during Educator Appreciation Week to thank them for their hard work meeting student needs virtually and in person.

## 6

### STUDENTS

from Maryland Law's Black Law Student Association competed virtually on the Firm sponsored and coached negotiation team.

## 890

### DEVICES

donated to PCs for People for Maryland as part of the Firm's move.

*Below: Peter Rosenwald, Member, who serves on the Firm's Community Engagement Committee, volunteered with his wife at the Maryland Food Bank (MFB) during the pandemic. The Firm also raised funds which contributed to the 63 million meals the MFB provided to people across Maryland during the first year of the pandemic.*

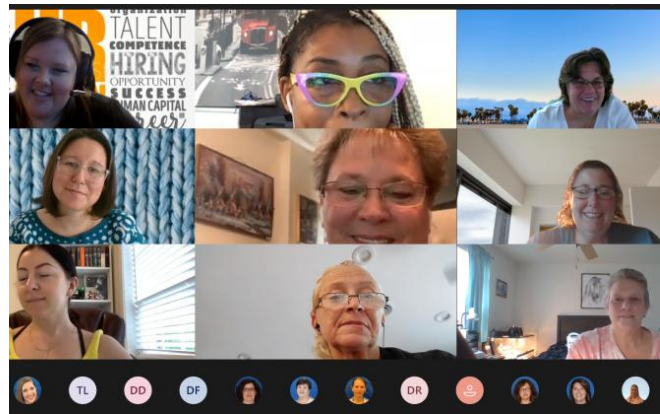


# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

## Affinity Groups

At Gordon Feinblatt, our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts range from recruitment, internal trainings and events celebrating diversity and fostering inclusion. We also offer four employee resource groups for staff to share information, build comradery and discuss current events.

- Caregivers Affinity Group - supporting people in caregiving roles, including taking care of children, elderly parents, and siblings with disabilities.
- People of Color - Launched in FY21 in recognition of the impact race has on professional and personal experiences, this groups celebrates personnel from all different racial backgrounds and finds common topics of interest that relate to being a person of color in the work place.
- Women's Alliance - Highlights include a discussion with the Women's Law Center and a candle making event with KSM Candle Co., a locally Black and woman owned business.
- Uplift- a group for staff interested in developing additional leadership skills.



**Left:** Aubrey Scheppske (top left), Office Administrator, leads an Uplift session with staff about rocking remote work.



**Above:** Lisa Jacobs-Brown (left), Practice Group Coordinator for the Personal Injury Group and Chair of the People of Color Affinity Group, poses with Julie Funk and Tevis Simon from the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI). Ms. Simon candidly shared the challenges she faced as a result of multi-generational mental health struggles, which were acerbated by racism she encountered growing up in Baltimore and a culture of silence regarding mental health.

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

## Student Programing

The Firm is committed to sponsoring and mentoring the next generation of legal talent, with an eye towards expanding the diversity of people entering the profession.

To that end, the Firm is a proud sponsor of the Office of the Attorney General's Thurgood Marshall Clerkship Program.

*Below: Alex Montanio, Associate, (top left), Maggie Witherup, Member (top right), and Todd Chason, Member (middle right), meet with students from the Clerkship program to discuss their summer experiences.*



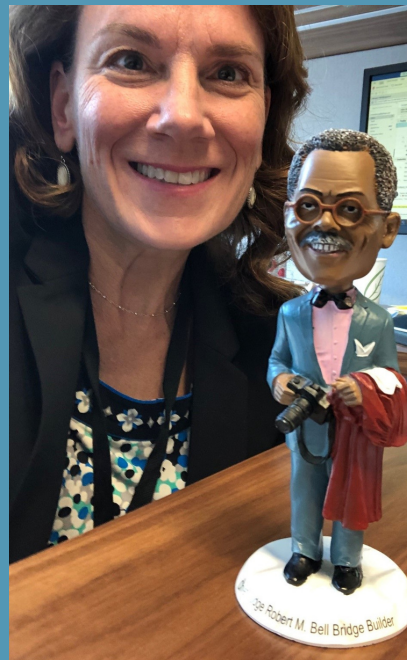
This eight week summer program gives first and second year law students, particularly those who are first generation law students or have overcome unique circumstances to become a law student, a paid opportunity to work with the Attorney General's office.

## Judge Bell

It is tradition for Maggie Witherup, Member, to educate Thurgood Marshall clerks and others about the story of the Honorable Robert Bell.

In 1960, Judge Bell was arrested for protesting segregation at a Baltimore lunch counter and, represented by Thurgood Marshall, he appealed his case to the Md. Court of Appeals, the highest state court, which initially upheld his conviction.

After a storied career as a lawyer, he ultimately became the first Black, male Chief Judge of that same court, 36 years after his arrest.



At the end of the clerkship, the students meet with Gordon Feinblatt lawyers to learn more about our Firm and the career paths and day to day experiences of our lawyers.

The Firm has been a proud sponsor for the last eight years.



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

## Celebrations

As we remained committed to inclusion despite remote operations, the Firm found unique ways to continue to celebrate holidays, individual milestones, and the hard work of our team members.



**1 and 2:** Babies, retirements, and other landmark personal moments, were celebrated with a combination of virtual events, digital well-wishes, and outdoor gatherings. **3:** Every member of the Firm received a care package from Baltimore in a Box, filled with treats from local small businesses, including Zeke's Coffee and Otterbein's Cookies. **4:** To celebrate Administrative Professional Days, our hardworking staff received thank you cards and snacks delivered to their home. **5:** The Firm's storied holiday party went digital with a trivia game, festive attire and themed virtual backgrounds.

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

In response to an increase in hate crimes against the Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, the Firm released the statement below in furtherance of continuing the broader dialogue and internal reflection around social justice issues and race.

## **Gordon Feinblatt's Statement in Support of the Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) Community**

*In the past year, there has been a tragic and unacceptable increase in violence against members of the Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) community across the country and in local communities in Maryland. We denounce these hateful acts in the strongest terms and extend our sympathy and support to all who are affected. No person should ever fear being attacked or degraded because of their identity. We know that these recent attacks are only the latest chapter in a long and often unrecognized history of violence and discrimination, from verbal slurs to physical attacks against members of the AAPI community in the United States. To create a safer and more inclusive future for our colleagues, clients, and friends, we must confront these historical racial injustices directly and continue to find ways to have honest conversations with colleagues, friends and family and to dismantle persistent systemic inequities today.*

*As a Firm and as individuals, speaking out and showing support for the AAPI community is a big step in bringing more attention to the issue. Furthering the education of the community at large on the history of racism against Asian Americans that has largely remained hidden would also help foster understanding of these issues.*

*Many groups have been leading the fight to protect the rights of the Asian community, and we are making a donation to the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center (APALRC), an organization that provides pro bono services to low income Asian American individuals in the region.*

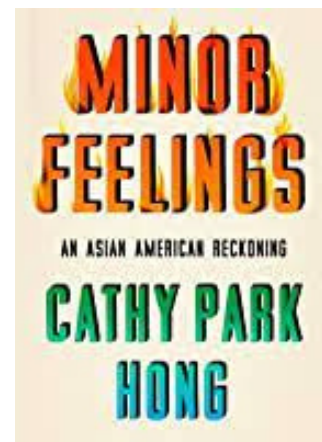
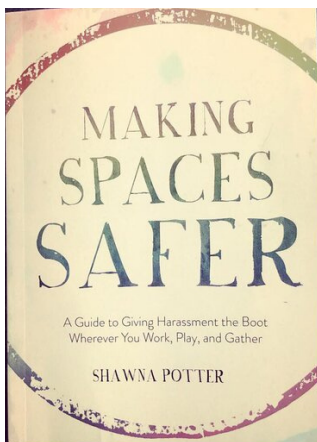
*We will continue to pursue and support the vital work of undoing the effects of bias and prejudice against Asians, both internally and in the greater community.*

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

## Education

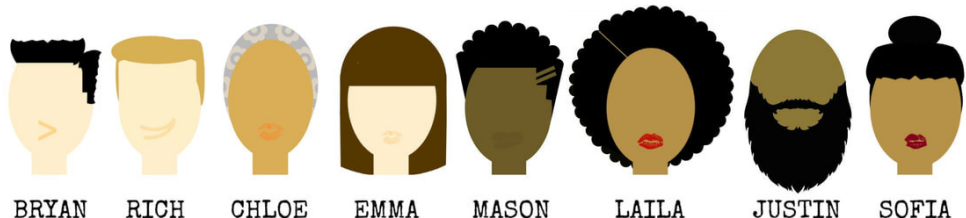
Our Firm is committed to expanding our understanding of and role in equity issues, both collectively and individually. To that end, we all participate in Firm wide training sessions at least annually. This year, we hosted two sessions. First, Natalie Gillard's "Factuality" presented an interactive introduction to structural inequality. Each participant chose a character with a different identify from their own, learned facts about inequality in education, pay, health, and other domains, and seeing how those facts impacted the selected character. Second, Shawna Potter, author of "Making Spaces Safer", presented a bystander intervention training which provided a variety of tools for us to use when encountering bias or other uncomfortable situations, in addition to the resources provided by the Firm's human resources team.

We also launched a quarterly DEI Bookclub, where interested participants read or listened to non-fiction books about DEI topics and then gathered to reflect and discuss the material. In FY21, we read "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Ijeoma Oluo and "Minor Feelings" by Cathy Park Hong.



## FACTUALITY®

A 90 MINUTE CRASH COURSE ON STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY IN AMERICA



BRYAN RICH CHLOE EMMA MASON LAILA JUSTIN SOFIA

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Board Service

Many firm personnel serve on the boards of Maryland nonprofits including:

- Baltimore Bar Foundation
- Baltimore Courthouse and Law Museum Foundation
- Baltimore Crisis Response, Inc.
- Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
- Baltimore Women's Giving Circle
- Baltimore Zoo
- Collaborative Professionals of Baltimore
- The College Bound Foundation
- Community Ecology Institute
- Community College of Baltimore County
- Enoch Pratt Free Library
- GEDCO
- Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake
- Harford Family House
- Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center
- Maryland Building Industry Association
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
- Maryland Food Bank
- Maryland SPCA
- Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts
- National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
- Simon E. Sobeloff Jewish Law Society
- St. Ignatius Loyola Academy
- United Way of Central Maryland

**Top:** Community members gather to install the Firm sponsored library in Turner Station, which was decorated by members of the local scout troops.

## Little Free Library



Many members of our Firm identify an early love of reading as contributing to future professional success, so we were eager to partner with Dundalk Cares, a coalition of area organizations and community members working towards a more equitable and inclusive Dundalk, to help establish a Little Free Library in the Turner Station neighborhood, one of 11 new libraries in the greater Dundalk community.

Little Free Libraries are free public book exchanges where neighbors can exchange new and gently used books.

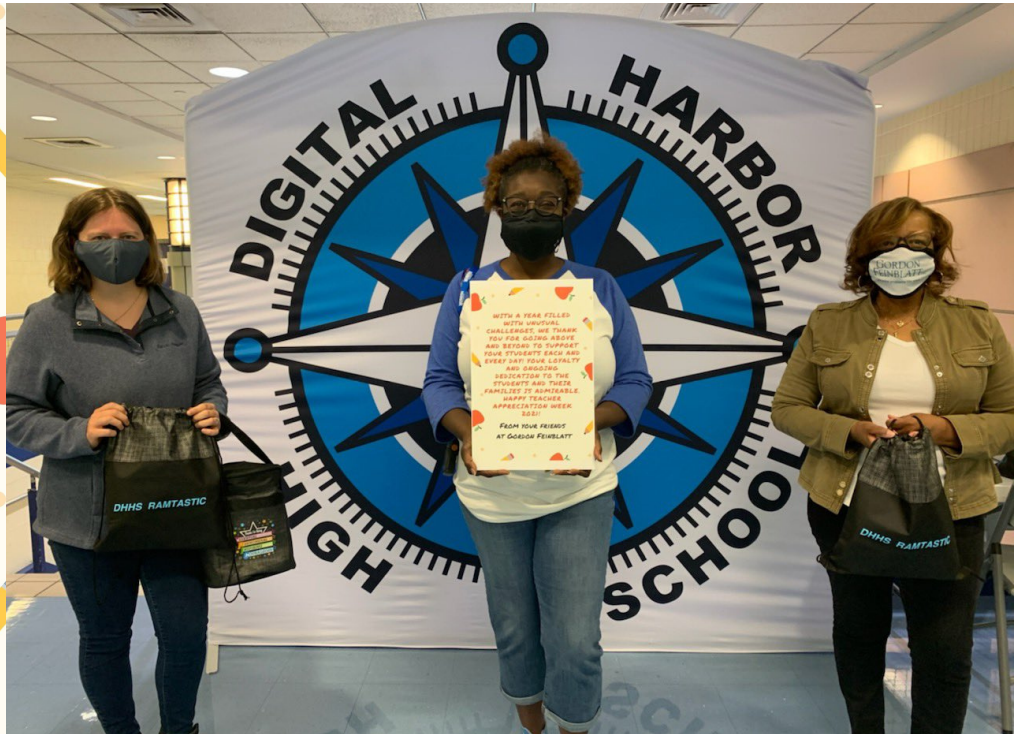
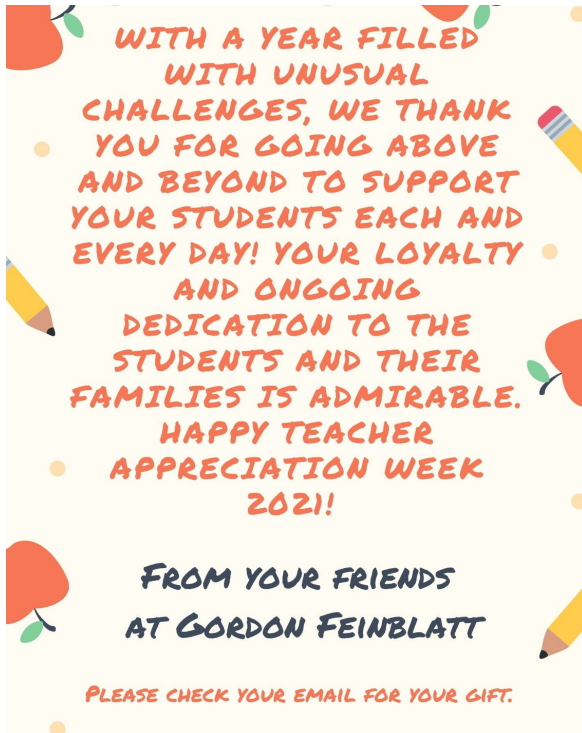
Dundalk Cares launched this project in part because members of a local girl scout troop noted that they often did not have access to books with characters who reflected their identity as young women of color.

In addition to funding the construction of a library, the Firm's donation supported the purchase of children's books that feature characters from diverse backgrounds, sourced from a local Black-owned bookstore, Everyone's Place African Cultural Center.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Digital Harbor

Below: Alex Montanio, Associate, (left) and Delores Elias, Learning and Development Administrator, (right) pictured with Assistant Principal Danielle Lee (center), visited Digital Harbor to help celebrate Teacher Appreciation week.



For the past three years, the Firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee has sponsored an annual Black History Month Essay Contest with Baltimore City Public School's Digital Harbor High School.

This year, the Community Engagement Committee supported a deepening of this partnership, as the pandemic challenged student and educators in ways not previously imagined. In addition to launching a mentorship program for seniors and conducting supply drives, we held a "Drinks for Digital" fundraiser.

Throughout the "Friday Updates with Todd" video series Searle Mitnick, Member, and Chris McMahan, Executive Director, submitted videos about their respective "famous" adult beverages and their playful debate about whose drink was better became a running theme.

Firm personnel got the chance to taste Searlaritas and McMahan's Mexican Martinis at home when members of the Committee solicited donations and delivered drinks. The funds were used to purchase gift cards for the entire staff at Digital Harbor High School during teacher appreciation week, to thank them for their efforts conducting virtual school.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## Holiday Spirit

Winter holidays are always a prime time for giving back, and this year was no different as annual Firm traditions continued.

We kicked off the season by donating a "Frozen" themed tree for Kennedy Krieger Institute's 31st annual Festival of Trees. Proceeds from the sale of the tree benefited students and patients with developmental disabilities and disorders of the brain, spinal cord, and musculoskeletal system.

Each year the Community Engagement Committee selects a charity to support in conjunction with the Firm's annual holiday card. This year, we choose to support the Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition, a new

group working on closing the digital divide in Baltimore City, an issue that predated the pandemic, but that the rapid shift to virtual learning deepened and further exposed. The Coalition provides access to devices and internet, skills training and technical support, and advocacy efforts to educate and petition politicians and others to take steps to address this issue.

Finally, we did a virtual drive with Digital Harbor High School. Firm personnel selected blankets to ship to the school, so all students could stay warm as they continued to study from home.

**Above:** Stephanie Forbes-Glave, Marketing Specialist, Kristin Ferraro, Administrative Assistant, and Eva Kessler, Research Specialist, helped to assemble the Firm's tree.

**Right:** The Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition's efforts are ongoing and include helping people access the Federal Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.



# SUSTAINABILITY

## Green Team

The Firm's physical transition from Redwood Street to Fleet Street served as the perfect catalyst for the Firm to begin formally evaluating and minimizing our environmental impact. In October 2020, we launched the Green Team, a new committee charged with thinking about sustainable programming and practices.

Soon after, the Firm joined the Law Firm Sustainability Network, a non-profit that facilitates a collaborative network of members of the legal industry to promote sustainable practices. For the first time, the Firm completed the American Legal Industry Sustainability Standards (ALISS) self-assessment. This program helps the Firm gauge our progress on implementing environmentally friendly practices from recycling to energy conservation. Over the next 18 months, we will continue to implement new policies with the goal of achieving the Bronze Level ALISS certification.

As we invested in technology for our new space, the Firm donated over 890 devices, including 262 computers, 275 monitors, and 174 phones to PCs for People Maryland. These devices were refurbished and distributed to families and non-profits throughout Maryland, saving them from the landfill.



**Top Right:** In 2021, the Firm became an ALISS Reporter for the first time.

**Bottom Right:** In our effort to minimize the use of single use plastics, we encouraged our staff and friends to use reusable drinkware both on the go and in the office.