

# The Bulletin

## Volunteer Lawyers, Business Council Combine For Culture

By SALLY FRIEDMAN  
FOR THE BULLETIN

PHILADELPHIA — There was a wedding of sorts last week in the elegant upstairs galleries of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts' Historic Landmark Building.

The event marked the happy union of two of Philadelphia's cultural institutions, and the "wedding gifts" will be distributed not just to the region's artists and arts organizations, but to its populace as well.

And therein lies a tale.

Back in 1978, Michael Coleman, then a lawyer who would become a partner at Philadelphia's Pepper Hamilton, became a unique matchmaker. Committed to helping individuals and organizations working — and sometimes struggling — in the arts, Mr. Coleman appealed to his fellow lawyers to volunteer their services and expertise at no cost to the arts community. It turned out to be a match made in heaven.

Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts was an instant success.

"We were able to create a supportive environment for artists and in the process, and we also were dedicated to keeping gifted artists from leaving the city for other places by providing them with free legal services," said Mr. Coleman, still a passionate advocate for the arts and currently a partner at a legal search company.

Meanwhile, another organization, the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia, launched in 1981 under the auspices of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, was also volunteering its services to help the region's arts and cultural institutions through the business acumen of its members.

The two organizations — same goal, different talents and resources — became one last week

in the merger that is the toast of the region's growing arts community.

"It's the first time Philadelphia's artists and arts organizations can go to one source and find a larger, stronger resource," said Mr. Coleman.

"Now the arts community can get advice about everything from how to incorporate to budgeting, strategic planning and leases and contracts — all at no cost. And when the Philadelphia arts and culture environment thrives, business thrives," Stephen S. Aichele, chair of the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia's board of directors, said.

For Karen Davis, president and CEO of the Arts and Business Council of Greater Philadelphia, the merger marks an early but vital step into a new era.

"Mergers between nonprofits in the arts and cultural sector are not yet common in this region, but may become more prevalent as corporate giving becomes more narrowly focused and strategic, and the growth of the nonprofit sector outpaces the growth of funding," said Ms. Davis.

The initial discussions about combining the two organization's energies and resources in a more cost-efficient manner recognized that in some ways, the sum could become greater than its parts.

"Best of all," noted Ms. Davis, "the new entity will be able to expand and deepen opportunities for individual artists and cultural organizations. And what that really means is the enhanced overall health of the cultural sector for the good of the region's citizens."

For complete information about the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia, phone 215-790-3600 or visit [www.artsandbusinessphila.org](http://www.artsandbusinessphila.org).

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Courtesy of Buchanan Public Relations

LEFT TO RIGHT: Michael Coleman, Karen Davis and Frederick Strober celebrate the Arts and Business Council and Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts union at a reception Tuesday night at the PAFA Historic Landmark Building.