



Lawyers Alliance for New York

Connecting lawyers, nonprofits, and communities

Volunteer Attorney Accomplishment for Internal and External News

Date: January 31, 2013
Name of Attorneys: Lance Soderstrom, Mwanga William Mtengule, and Maritza Schaeffer
Name of Firm: Alston & Bird LLP
Client Served: FamilyCook Productions (“FamilyCook”)

Accomplishment: Helped to update employee handbook, evaluate a lease, and structure a license agreement to allow a healthy cooking organization to serve more low-income New Yorkers.

Specific Case Highlights: FamilyCook Productions brings people of all ages together around delicious, affordable fresh food while positively impacting their health and well-being. Since the late 1990s, FamilyCook’s evidence-based programs and curricula have reached more than 100,000 families across the United States, teaching hands-on cooking in schools, community organizations, farms, and other urban and rural settings.

In 2010, FamilyCook reorganized as a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization under the legal name FamilyCook Community Table (dba FamilyCook Productions) and closed down the S Corporation of that name. The founder transferred all the company assets to the new not-for-profit corporation with the exception of the intellectual property, which reverted to the founder’s business, Lynn Fredericks Innovations, Inc. (“LFI”). In 2012, FamilyCook approached Lawyers Alliance for assistance with a variety of legal needs related to its nonprofit structure, operations, and active programs to encourage healthy living.

Lance Soderstrom, Mwanga William Mtengule, and Maritza Schaeffer of Alston & Bird LLP volunteered to assist FamilyCook. The team provided a thorough review and revision of FamilyCook’s employment policies, resulting in a clear, comprehensible document. The attorneys also handled a sensitive real estate issue regarding FamilyCook’s existing leased commercial space, ultimately advising against further legal action. Additionally, the Alston & Bird team represented FamilyCook’s Board and structured a new license agreement with founder Lynn Fredericks and LFI in order to allow FamilyCook to continue to use Frederick’s programs as the scope of the organization’s operations expand. Together, the Alston & Bird attorneys addressed FamilyCook’s most pressing legal concerns in order to further its programs and continue to reach its more than 100,000 constituents.

Lynn Fredericks was grateful for the assistance, stating, “The employee handbook is perfect: easy for our employees to understand, without jargon. The attorneys helped me think through the rental problem clearly and now we rent training space as needed, which spared me costs, and a lot of headaches. The intellectual property and licensing issue was potentially very delicate, and the team navigated the issue beautifully, and with total transparency. The end result is that the Board and I are both comfortable with our agreement and FamilyCook can continue to run smoothly. The Alston team had a very generous spirit and was simply great.”

About Lawyers Alliance for New York: Lawyers Alliance for New York is the leading provider of business and transactional legal services for nonprofit organizations that are improving the quality of life in New York City neighborhoods. By connecting lawyers, nonprofits, and communities, we help nonprofits to develop affordable housing, stimulate economic development, promote community arts, and operate and advocate for vital programs for children and young people, the elderly, and other low-income New Yorkers. Each year, staff attorneys at Lawyers Alliance and more than 1,400 volunteers serve more than 600 clients.

Inquiries: Please contact Marketing and Communications Manager Emily Crossan at 212-219-1800 ext. 233 with questions or requests for additional information.