



Attorney Abigail Williams drops the puck on opening night of the Worcester Sharks 2007-2008 season (top left); Michael Myers and Sharks Player Dan Spang speak to a group of students at Elm Park Elementary School (top right); and Attorney Stephen M. Valente speaks to about 200 students at East Brookfield Elementary School (bottom right).

Abigail Williams & Associates believe in giving back

For the past 11 years the staff at Abigail Williams & Associates PC has been dedicated to serving the community by improving healthcare through outreach, education and advocacy.

For the second straight year, the medical malpractice firm headed by attorney Abigail Williams will put its philosophy to work by presenting its popular "Be A Leader" program to Worcester County schools during this upcoming school year. The interactive assembly style program for fourth, fifth and sixth graders, was created in partnership with the Worcester Sharks of the American Hockey League. The "Be A Leader" Program features players, attorneys, staff members and FINZ, the Sharks' mascot, and emphasizes leadership in and out of the classroom.

Attorney Abigail Williams speaks to the value of the program: "Our goal is to create leaders. By offering programs that foster education, motivation and confidence at a young age, we hope to inspire their desire to become responsible adults. We want these students to believe in themselves and have the skills needed to make positive change in their communities."

This year, Abigail Williams & Associates will incorporate sponsorship of the Sharks' previously established "Reading is Cool" program. "Reading is Cool" is an individual classroom program available for children in kindergarten through 3rd grade, emphasizing the importance of reading through the use of Sharks players and FINZ. Each week, a Shark's player reads aloud to a class of students. The program is fun for kids, and is an effective way to promote literacy throughout the greater Worcester community.

While the "Be A Leader" program is original, Michael Myers, director of community relations for the Worcester Sharks, says his team modeled the "Reading is Cool" program after a similar program the San Jose Sharks pioneered in California.

"Our response has been phenomenal," Myers says. "Schools that we've brought the program to are very excited

to have us return. It's been really neat."

Myers credits Williams and her staff for going to the schools and speaking alongside the hockey players, and not just writing a check. "They're very much hands-on," Myers says. "One of the nice things about working with Abigail Williams is that she likes to make a difference — it's been a great relationship."

The ultimate goal is to start programs with students in the lower grades and continue with them throughout their educational experience. Last year, the firm sponsored 12 "Be A Leader" assemblies in schools. This year, the goal is 30.

"We're looking to get out into the community and do something a little different than just normal pro bono work," Attorney Stephen M. Valente says. "We want to give back to the community. Many firms do this through outreach programs like elder care, homeless shelters, and city clean-up projects. Those are important, but we wanted to do something where we could get at the ground floor, where we could affect the lives of children and have them grow and create a better today and a better tomorrow."

The firm emphasizes the value of teamwork whether in the classroom, courtroom, or on the ice. The lessons the firm teaches are the same ones the Sharks and the firm practice. They are a team and nobody is greater than the whole. From Abby down to the intern, who's been in the office for a day, they all work for the client individually and collectively. The firm believes that by inspiring leadership and improving education, you can improve the quality of the person and create a future team player for the community.

Attorney Williams and paralegal Katie Leahey go into the Worcester County community to speak to senior citizen and public safety organizations. They hope to promote safety awareness and proper patient protocol. Williams, in addition to being an attorney, holds a Masters in Public Health, a Masters in Emergency and Disaster Planning along with a Bachelors in Nursing. She consults nationally on health law issues and speaks at conferences on numerous topics. These

include leadership training for hospital management, legal issues in EMS and the impact of violence on trauma centers.

"Much of what we do is quite altruistic," Leahey says. "We, as a firm, sincerely care about the improvement of the healthcare system. We genuinely believe in what we do."

Abigail Williams and Associates firmly believe that leadership prepares individuals to positively change their lives and communities by fostering the belief that they can achieve and become everything they envision. A quality program that is capable of achieving real change in school culture and the global community is rare. "Be A Leader" strives to be such a program. ■



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