

RAYMOND G. LAPLACA '83

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE AWARD

PATRICIA YOUNG

An impressive number of awards are stacking up in this man's favor. Raymond G. LaPlaca is a businessman and lawyer whose interests and time have run the gamut from humanitarian efforts to government appointments—and that barely scratches the surface.



LaPlaca adds one more laurel to his wreath with the School of Law's Distinguished Graduate Award.

If a picture paints a thousand words, then a mere snapshot couldn't begin to describe this man with a genuine philanthropic nature. LaPlaca is the past president and a current member of the Bonnie

John's Children's Fund, an organization founded 10 years ago in Prince George's County to help children at risk. He is the recipient of the Caritas Award, given by the Archdiocese of Washington, for his work with Catholic Charities. He also has received the Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, for which he served on the board of directors for the National Capital Area and on the executive committee for Prince George's County.

"Awards are a funny thing," LaPlaca states, "most recipients feel they don't deserve them." He remarks that receiving the School of Law's Distinguished Graduate Award is no different. "To be honored by my law school is one of the most flattering and satisfying experiences. I was totally shocked. It is humbling to be selected among so many outstanding graduates who have continued practicing in their chosen fields," he says.

As partner in the law firm of Night, Manzi, Nussbaum & LaPlaca and a general partner in the commercial real estate development company Carrolton Enterprises, LaPlaca is a thoughtful individual who does not eschew the hard edges of a successful veteran businessman and lawyer. Instead, what centers him is the simple philosophy of giving back to the communities that have nurtured him along the way.

A first-generation Italian American and

one of five children, LaPlaca was born and raised in Washington, D.C. As an undergraduate studying business at the University of Maryland, College Park, he thought about attending law school. But he was young and married with four children. Law school would have to wait. It wasn't until he was 42 years old that he decided the time was right. "My four children (two of whom are lawyers) were in college, my wife returned to school—even my dog was in obedience school. I thought I might as well join in."

Law school suited LaPlaca. Upon graduating in 1983, he immediately joined what is now his partnership, while retaining an association with Carrolton Enterprises. His interests and experiences are married in his practice of corporate business law and estate planning.

His numerous appointments and memberships reflect his varied interests. "It keeps me from going stale," LaPlaca states. He is on the board of directors for the Greater Washington Board of Trade and for The Columbia Bank. LaPlaca is well-connected to the University System as chair of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Visitors for the University of Maryland, College Park, and as a member of the Board of Directors for the University of Maryland Foundation and the University of Maryland Medical System, Shock Trauma Center. He is also on the Board of Visitors for the School of Law. LaPlaca was appointed by Gov. Parris N. Glendening as chair of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Transportation, Goals, Indicators and Benchmarks as well as a member of the Governor's Commission for Education, Finance, Equity and Excellence for the State of Maryland.

If this isn't enough, LaPlaca just finished a teaching stint in the fall 2001 semester as an adjunct professor for the law school. He taught Counseling and Negotiation and found the experience to be extremely satisfying. "Teaching is very fulfilling. It keeps me young and in touch

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ANDREW D. LEVY '81

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN PRO BONO SERVICE AWARD

PATRICIA YOUNG

His casework ranges from criminal defense to public interest and civil rights. His prominence in the field is proclaimed with an "AV" rating ("very high to pre-eminent legal ability and very high ethical standards") from Martindale Hubbell and inclusion in the 2001-2002 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America* in the criminal defense category. As a member of a law firm that promotes *pro bono* activity, it is not surprising that Andrew D. Levy '82 is this year's recipient of the School of Law's Benjamin L. Cardin Pro Bono Service Award.

Levy always knew he wanted to be a trial lawyer and, after graduating with honors in political science from Indiana University and the University of Maryland School of Law, Levy's stage was set. At the time Levy attended law school, he explains, "'The Lawyer' was Perry Mason. I knew I wanted to try cases, not conduct business deals."

Levy has successfully achieved his goal. He is a partner with Brown, Goldstein & Levy, a firm that handles a variety of civil, criminal and appellate cases in both state and federal courts. Levy is proud to be associated with a group of lawyers who believe that having a license to practice law carries with it the responsibility of giving something back. "I have always felt that a very important part of being a citizen—and especially a person privileged to have a law degree—is to give back," states Levy.

In one of his most important cases, Levy was lead post-conviction counsel for Joyce Danna, who spent more than 12 years in prison for killing her abusive hus-

band. "This was a rewarding *pro bono* case," Levy recounts. "Here was a woman who spent a long time in prison for being in a terrible situation." Levy asserts that the plight of battered spouses was not as well-understood back in the late '70s as it is today. "This case was an effort for the courts to revisit women in this situation." Levy had her conviction reversed on appeal in 1992.

Another landmark case altered the course of Levy's caseload. The Potomac Group Home Corp. v. Montgomery Co. (Md.) was a real watershed case, says Levy. State and local zoning ordinances required neighbors to be notified prior to the opening of group homes. "Neighbors were getting involved and preventing homes from opening," Levy says. The Potomac case struck down those requirements and reopened past cases. "This case allowed people with disabilities to live in the community," confirms Levy.

Levy obtained the first judgment in the country under the design and construction requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act. Today, he serves as an alumni representative to the School of Law's new building committee, and he is on the board of directors for The League for People with Disabilities

Inc. and LINC (Learning Independence through Computers). Levy is also on the Maryland Stadium Authority Ad Hoc Accessibility Committee.

For his work on behalf of the disabled, Levy was awarded the Maryland Bar Foundation's 2000 Professional Legal Excellence Award for the Advancement of the Rights of the Disadvantaged. And he received the Disability Advocacy and Awareness Award in 2001 from the League for People with Disabilities.

"Things happen in funny ways," Levy says of his work promoting the rights of



the disadvantaged. "I didn't plan to go down this path."

Levy also may not have seen himself as a full-time visiting professor for the School of Law. But, this Perry Mason surrogate took a sabbatical from his law firm to teach Torts, Legal Analysis & Writing, and Evidence during the 2001-2002 academic year.

This is not his initial foray into teach-

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