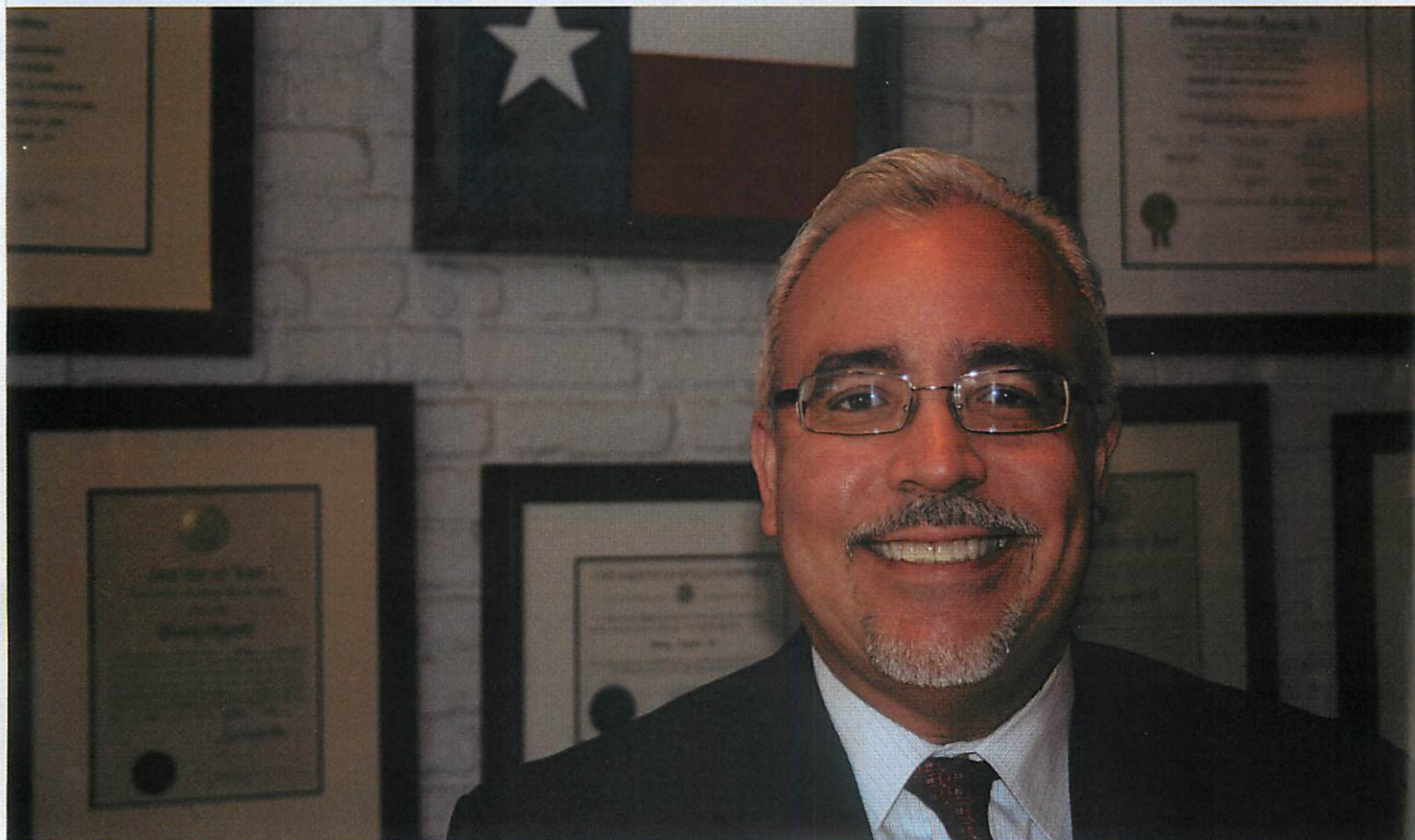


## *community* LEADER

Giving back has reached a new level in the Hispanic community. These entrepreneurs seek to serve in ways others cannot, enhancing their company identities and their surroundings.



### An Advocate for Fair Treatment

Benny Agosto, Jr., a partner in Houston's oldest plaintiff-law firm and the HNBA's national president, elicits change through pro-bono work

BY TRENN A NEES

**W**hat do a former international soccer player, a former teacher, and a current legal advocate all have in common? Simple. They are all the same man.

Benny Agosto, Jr., a partner with Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto & Friend

of Houston, Texas, has a story to tell. As the middle child of five, Agosto was born in New York City and raised in Puerto Rico. From a young age, Agosto was taught by his parents that through hard work and determination, anything was possible—a principle he's applied throughout his life, in school, on the soccer field, and in the courtroom.

"Both of my parents have a sixth-grade education," Agosto shares, "and every day they would tell my siblings and me to be sure to get an education. I remember my father telling me that no one can ever take that away from you. My parents knew the struggles of being a migrant family without a formal education."



During his college career, Benny Agosto, Jr. played NCAA Division I soccer at Houston Baptist University. The lessons he learned on the soccer field—including those of leadership and hard work—contribute to his success as a partner at Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto & Friend.

Hard work on the soccer field and in school paid off for Agosto. An avid soccer player in San Juan, Agosto was recruited by Houston Baptist University to attend and play NCAA Division 1 soccer. While at Houston Baptist University, Agosto decided to pursue his education and earned his bachelor's in science. He went on to the University of Houston to work on his graduate degree in microbiology and taught high-school and college students for six years. Agosto realized that although he loved teaching and coaching soccer, he needed to do more. He was accepted to South Texas College of Law, where he excelled in mock trial and academics and is now a board-certified trial lawyer.

As the Hispanic National Bar Association's (HNBA) 2011–2012 national president, Agosto brings many important issues to the forefront of the national debate. And although those issues are voiced throughout the duration of the year, there is also a specific day that HNBA members travel to Washington, DC, and speak to legislators about issues pertinent to all Hispanics. "The HNBA Legislative Day is paramount for us," Agosto says. "It is an important day to advocate for Hispanics in regards to the fair and equitable administration of justice." Another important upcoming HNBA event is the Mid-year Corporate Counsel Conference. "It brings together general counsels and is an excellent opportunity for young Hispanic lawyers to participate in the job fair, attend

seminars on promoting favorable minority hiring practices, and, most importantly, to make connections between members to continue the advancement of all Hispanics in the national legal community."

Deeply committed to community, scholarship, and making a difference, Agosto is a member of many bar associations throughout Texas and sits on the board of directors for a handful as well. Agosto is the founder of the Mexican American Bar Association of Texas Foundation (MABATx Foundation). With the support and help of his family and his staff, Agosto built the MABATx Foundation to benefit young, Hispanic, Houston-area law students through scholarships. To date, the MABATx Foundation has raised over \$100,000. The Foundation also sponsors a Law Student Conference and corresponding reception, where scholarships are awarded to young, aspiring attorneys to help handle the expenses of law school. "I am the vine of this foundation," Agosto acknowledges. "It was a personal endeavor, and I am committed to the students who benefit from these scholarships."

Agosto is also a cofounder of the HNBA's Legal Education Fund along with his peers Roman Hernandez and Omar Vargas. The Legal Education Fund is the HNBA's only 501(c) 3 charitable group that raises money to give 100 percent of its contributions towards minority scholarships. As an advocate for gender fairness, Agosto works with programs

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**Congratulations,  
best wishes and  
continued success to  
Benny Agosto, Jr.**

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AND TO HIS  
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WATKINS, HIS  
STAFF AND FAMILY



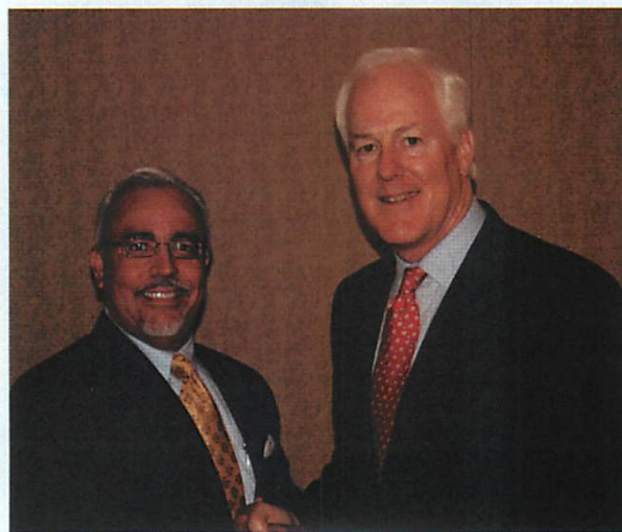
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“I believe that we all have a duty to our community and civic responsibility, but I also believe that you have to expand yourself out of your community to the state level, and then national, which is what the HNBA is allowing me to do.”



Benny Agosto, Jr. greets Senator John Cornyn during a press conference they held to urge Washington to fill judicial vacancies in Texas and throughout the nation.

to promote flexible and sustaining practices that help women attorneys balance a family and a demanding career. “Females account for 50 percent of law-school enrollment,” Agosto shares, “which is good and long overdue. But the fact remains that the percentage of women in corporate law remains relatively low and the percentage of Hispanic women in corporate law even lower.”

Continuing on the trend of community outreach, Agosto has been credited for rewriting a Texas law concerning police officers assisting one another regardless of on-duty/off-duty status. In this landmark case (*Hinojosa v. Harris County*), Agosto’s client had previously been denied workman’s compensation benefits after being injured because he was deemed off duty when he had responded to an officer’s call for assistance. Notably, the case, which resulted in a million-dollar award in benefits in favor of the client, was taken by Agosto on a pro-bono basis.

Although a named partner in Houston’s oldest plaintiff-law firm, Agosto continues his outreach to help and mentor young people in the community through his guest lecturing and speaker appearances. Agosto frequently speaks to students attending Houston-area schools, colleges, and universities on the importance of jury service and the Constitution of the United States. Agosto also delivers his inspirational advocacy message to Spanish-speaking communities as well as other attorneys, businessmen, and law professors, and is a frequent speaker on issues relating to civil litigation across the country.

“I am blessed to be able to make a difference in today’s world,” Agosto says. “I put everything I have into learning and challenging myself, to love and support my family, and to help better my community. Change can begin in your own community, but when you reach out to other communities, you can change the world, one act of kindness at a time.” *H/E*