

Karen J. Mathis



Karen J. Mathis is president and chief executive officer of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the nation's largest donor-based volunteer network of mentors for youth, a nonprofit organization proven to help children of single, low-income, and incarcerated parents beat the odds. A former big sister herself, she joined the organization in September, 2009 after completing a one-year assignment as executive director of the Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI) Institute. CEELI is a preeminent international nonprofit provider of post-graduate professional legal education in Prague, and she worked there with judges and government officials throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Eurasia.

Prior to her work at CEELI, Ms. Mathis practiced law for 34 years, most recently as a partner of McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP, a multi-state diversified law firm with 230 practicing attorneys.

Ms. Mathis served as the third woman president of the American Bar Association, where she created the Youth at Risk program, whose goal is to help children ages 12 through 19 in the juvenile and criminal justice system; created the Commission on Second Season of Service, directed at keeping retiring baby boomers active and contributing to the profession; aided in the launch of the DirectWomen program, designed to train a juried pool of women to sit on publicly-traded corporate boards of directors; and convened the Rule of Law Symposia, which were two meetings that examined issues including the trafficking of women and girls.

Her previous ABA involvement includes chair of the 30,000-member General Practice, Solo & Small Firm Section (now a Division) from 2002-2003, chair of the Commission on Women in the Profession from 1997-2000, and chair of the House of Delegates from August 2000-2002. She also was a member of the ABA Board of Governors.

Ms. Mathis is a collaborator with many external relationships. She has significant experience as an organizational leader, coalition builder, fundraiser,

and advocate. She has partnered with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, testified before many congressional committees, and worked with White House staff. She has addressed prestigious audiences worldwide and nationally, including the National Conference of State Court Chief Justices, Justices of the International Criminal Court, and many universities. Ms. Mathis has worked with all five branches of the U.S. military and lobbied successfully on behalf of servicemen and women, as well as their families.

Other activities include serving as director on the national board of Volunteers of America and past board leader for the Mile High Girl Scout Council. Mathis is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Denver, received a law degree from the University of Colorado Law School, and has honorary degrees from five other institutions. She has been honored by many organizations, including the National Network for Youth, the U.S. Air Force, and the National Association of Women Lawyers.

She has been active in both the Denver and Colorado Bar Associations for many years. She served as vice president of the CBA from 1992-1993 and was a founding member of the Colorado Women's Bar Association. A member of the Colorado and International Women's Forums, she has been honored as an outstanding lawyer by the Denver and Colorado Bar Associations, the University of Colorado, and the University of Albany School of Law.