In 1993, at their 35th Harvard Law School reunion, Phil Zeidman (Washington, DC), known for his experience as one of the leading franchise practitioners in the world, along with several of his classmates, created Appleseed, a nonprofit whose goal it is to address systemic legal and economic problems through the combined efforts of lawyers and civic leaders. More than twenty years later, Appleseed has established 17 Centers across the US and Mexico, and firm lawyers from 20 of our offices continue to engage with the Appleseed Network. Phil serves as outside counsel to Appleseed.

On a national level, Phil and Lisa Dewey (Washington, DC) work with Appleseed’s Board and staff to promote its network model, organizing and supporting Appleseed Centers working on collaborative projects in its core areas of education, financial access, hunger, juvenile justice and immigrant rights. Appleseed serves as a clearinghouse for the projects largely initiated by its Centers to meet the needs they have identified, promote their work and provide them with technical assistance.
APPLESEED MEXICO: Since 2008, New Perimeter and Mexico Appleseed have worked to encourage a culture of pro bono service by teaching about pro bono and access to justice at law schools in Mexico. We also worked with the Center, and other law firms, to investigate and draft a widely-cited report on unaccompanied minors at the border and to draft materials to assist immigrants in keeping their financial assets and custodial rights to their children. Lawyers from several DLA Piper offices have travelled to Mexico to advance our efforts; and our Mexico City office works closely with Mexico Appleseed to serve local nonprofit organizations and develop resources to promote access to justice in Mexico.

DC APPLESEED: Since 2002, DLA Piper and DC Appleseed have worked to affect change in the District of Columbia’s special education system, including the special education due process system in DC Public Schools. We advocated for alternative dispute resolution as a way to provide services to children more quickly, less expensively and with relationships intact. Together, we continue to identify strategies to improve outcomes for students transitioning from private to public special education settings.

TEXAS APPLESEED: In 2015, our lawyers worked with Texas Appleseed to reform Texas’ juvenile justice system with a law ending the state’s 20-year practice of sending children to adult criminal court for missing school. The new law protects children from receiving fines and jail time, requires that schools examine the reasons behind students’ absences before referring them to court and prohibits schools from referring them to court if absences are because of pregnancy, homelessness, chronic illness or special education.

CHICAGO APPLESEED: DLA Piper’s Chicago office is working closely with Chicago Appleseed to improve local courts.

GEORGIA APPLESEED: Lawyers from our Atlanta office worked with Georgia Appleseed for several years on heirs’ property and juvenile justice issues.

NEBRASKA APPLESEED: DLA Piper worked with Nebraska Appleseed to protect the rights of children in foster care.

The theme that united the first Appleseed generation, and that motivates volunteers today, is the idea that the law can be an effective tool to give people the chance to fulfill their potential in life. Our lawyers find tremendous satisfaction in watching the seeds of justice blossom through their work with Appleseed.