

Events Will Mark VPLC Milestone

The Virginia Poverty Law Center has planned a series of events next month to celebrate its twenty-five years of service to low-income Virginians.

First, it will host a public forum entitled "Society's Greatest Unfinished Work, The War on Poverty: Where Are We Now?," on March 16 at 7 P.M. at the University of Richmond's T. C. Williams Law School.

Rodney A. Smolla, dean of the law school, will lead panelists and the audience through a role-playing exercise and discussion to draw out different welfare reform scenarios and their political impact.

Panelists will include Mark H. Greenberg, director of policy for the Center for Law and Social Policy in Washington; Harlan

Beckley, professor of religion and director of the Sheppard Center for Poverty Studies at Washington & Lee University; Susan T. Gooden, director of the Race and Social Policy Research Center at Virginia Tech; and Jean W. Cunningham, a former member of the Virginia House of Delegates from Richmond.

The forum will take place on the fortieth anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson's speech to Congress calling for a national response to poverty.

On March 18, best-selling author David Baldacci will sign copies of his latest thriller, *Split Second*, starting at 4 P.M. at Saks Fifth Avenue in Stony Point Fashion Park in Richmond. Saks will donate proceeds from the book sales to the Poverty Law Center.

The celebration will culminate with a dinner March 18 at 6:30 P.M. at the University of Richmond's Jepson Alumni Center, where Baldacci will be the featured speaker. Senior Justice Harry L. Carrico of the Supreme Court of Virginia serves as honorary chair of the event. Tickets are \$100, and can be purchased by calling Sarah Jane Wyatt at the Poverty Law Center, (804) 782-9430.

The Virginia Poverty Law Center is a non-profit corporation that represents low-income Virginians in civil cases, provides training for legal aid programs and advocates for low-income people in the legislature and regulatory system.



VIRGINIA LEGAL AID AWARD

Since 1992 at the Virginia State Bar's Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach, an outstanding legal aid attorney has received the Virginia Legal Aid Award. Established by the bar's Special Committee on Access to Legal Services, the award is presented at a luncheon for interested members of the legal aid and pro bono communities.

While there is no official form to complete, the Access Committee asks that nominations be in writing and include a description of how the nominee exhibits the following qualities in his or her work: 1) Innovation and creativity in advocacy; 2) Experience and excellence in service; and 3) Impact beyond his or her own program's service area. The nominee must be a member of the VSB and an employee of a legal aid society that is licensed by the VSB to operate in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The deadline for bar receipt of nominations is April 28, 2004.

Please submit all nominations to:
Access to Legal Services Committee
c/o Maureen Petrini, Access to Legal Services Director
Virginia State Bar
707 East Main Street, Suite 1500
Richmond, Virginia 23219-2800
Phone: (804) 775-0522, Fax: (804) 775-0582
e-mail: petrini@vsb.org



Phyllis Katz Honored by Bar Association

A lifetime of commitment to her community and profession has earned lawyer Phyllis C. Katz a “Woman of Achievement Award” from the Metropolitan Richmond Women’s Bar Association.

Katz, who practices employment and local government law with Sands Anderson Marks & Miller in Richmond, is principally known for co-founding the Legal Information Network for Cancer (LINC), through which eighty specially-trained lawyers provide pro bono help to more than four hundred cancer patients a year.

A two-time survivor of cancer, she has contributed hundreds of pro bono hours to LINC each year since 1996.

As the Metro Richmond Women’s Bar award joins others she has received—including the Richmond Bar Association’s Pro Bono Publico Award, the YWCA’s Outstanding Woman Award and the J.C. Penny Community Award—Katz is forging ahead.

She and LINC co-founder Ann C. Hodges, a law professor at the University of Richmond, are considering a new project.

They hope to develop a how-to manual to be used by local bar leaders and cancer advocacy groups. The manual would carry the lessons learned by LINC in the Richmond area to volunteers statewide. “It is only through the support of members of the local bar that local organizations can

be developed to provide such services,” Katz said.

The seven Sands Anderson colleagues who nominated Katz for the award pointed at several other service projects she has been involved in since she began practicing in 1982.

“Phyllis’s motto in life is that ‘the real measure of a person is the stones that one leaves behind.’ Helping others and helping the community have been an integral part of Phyllis’s faith and persona, and provide the best credentials for this award,” they wrote.

Her service began in Athens, Ohio, where she served on the City Council before she became a lawyer. Starting in 1967, she helped create parks for young children and the disabled, and she established a downtown tree-planting program.

In the 1980s, she set up an annual blanket donation drive for the homeless. The project distributed more than twenty-five hundred blankets in the four years it operated.

In 1988, while she was serving as director of the Virginia Department of Employee Relations Counselors, she worked with the agency’s deputy director to establish a program to mediate employment disputes. The program uses trained employee volunteers and is considered the largest mediation network in the state, according to the nomination letter.



She also helped establish Virginia Commonwealth University’s Certificate Program for Managers of Not-for-Profit Organizations. She continues to teach management and law courses for that program.

Katz has been cited numerous times for her public service and mentoring of young lawyers. In 1986, while she was with the Virginia attorney general’s office, then-Attorney General Mary Sue Terry recognized her contributions, stating that “she has evidenced great humanity and dedication . . . her colleagues and clients alike have welcomed and recognized the kindness, energy and imagination shown in her [legal] work.”

—Dawn Chase

Mark Your Calendar for the
14TH ANNUAL VSB PRO BONO CONFERENCE

Afternoon CLEs and Evening Award Ceremony & Reception

Thursday, May 13, 2004

University of Richmond School of Law

Look for details in future issues of the *Virginia Lawyer* and *Register*, online at www.vsb.org or call VSB Pro Bono at (804) 775-0548 or 0522.

Jennifer Borum Named “Volunteer of the Year”

As Big Brothers Big Sisters Services Inc. was a month away from its Fourteenth Annual Duck Race in Richmond’s Kanawha Canal last summer, the organization received disturbing news.

A company that used to rent ducks to the metropolitan Richmond nonprofit filed for an injunction to shut down the race for three years—a threat to Big Brothers Big Sisters’s biggest fundraiser.

To the rescue sprang Jennifer L. Borum, an intellectual property and antitrust litigator for Hunton & Williams in Richmond. She headed up a pro bono team that staved off the threat, and upwards of twenty thousand yellow plastic ducks made their swim on schedule July 26.

For that, Borum has been named “Volunteer of the Year” by the organization, which matches children with adults who serve as role models, companions and friends.

The controversy involved Arizona-based Great American Merchandise & Events (GAME), which rented ducks to Big Brothers Big Sisters from 1990 to 2001. In 2001, the nonprofit canceled the contract, after the Virginia Department of Charitable Gaming reported that GAME didn’t have a license to provide “gaming supplies”—i.e., ducks—in Virginia.

The company filed suit in January 2003 in Arizona. The case eventually was transferred to federal court in Richmond, where it was dismissed in October.

Big Brothers Big Sisters has made an investment that should protect it from similar problems in the future, said Borum, who serves on the nonprofit’s board. “We bought ducks,” she said.

—Dawn Chase

