



Young Lawyers Are Committed to Pro Bono

PART OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR'S mission is to "advance the availability and quality of legal services provided to the people of Virginia." Comment 1 to Rule 6.1 of the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct reminds us that "[e]very lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional work load, has a responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay, and personal involvement in the problems of the disadvantaged can be one of the most rewarding experiences in the life of a lawyer."

In these troubling economic times, pro bono work has taken on even greater importance. With the rise in unemployment, foreclosures, and bankruptcies, the demand for pro bono services is increasing. At the same time, financial resources that support pro bono services are decreasing in many areas of Virginia.

The Young Lawyers Conference (YLC) helps provide high-quality pro bono legal services to the public. The following are some of our pro bono efforts.

Created in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the **Wills for Heroes** program provides free legal estate planning services to police, firefighters, and other first responders in Virginia. Cosponsored by the Virginia State Bar YLC and the Virginia Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (VBA YLD), the program works with local bar associations and young lawyers groups to implement the program in cities and counties across the state. Volunteer attorneys receive free continuing legal education (CLE) training in estate planning. The volunteers help first

responders understand the importance of estate planning, then meet with them one-on-one to draft a basic will, advanced medical directive, and power of attorney.

First implemented with Arlington firefighters, the program has now produced more than one thousand wills in Bristol, Charlottesville, Chesterfield, Danville, Norfolk, Roanoke, Williamsburg, and Albemarle, Cumberland, Henrico, and Hanover counties. For more information, or to volunteer, contact program chair Andrew G. Geyer at ageyer@hunton.com or (804) 787-8164, or board liaisons Christy E. Kiely at ckieley@hunton.com or (804) 788-8677 and Erin S. Whaley at erin.whaley@troutmansanders.com or (804) 697-1389.

Last year, the YLC inaugurated the **Mental Health Project**. On two occasions, young lawyer volunteers provided on-site legal counseling to persons with mental health disabilities at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute in Fairfax and the Blue Ridge Clubhouse of the Region Ten Community Services Board in Charlottesville. Topics covered include housing discrimination, family law, support, job discrimination, and civil commitment issues. For more information, contact program chair Nathan J.D. Veldhuis at Nathan.valdhuis@tremblaysmith.com or (434) 977-4455, or board liaison Daniel L. Gray.

The **Emergency Legal Services Program** is cosponsored with the VBA YLD. It provides pro bono assistance to Virginians affected by natural disasters or other mass emergencies. Modeled after the American Bar Association's

Disaster Legal Services Program, the program maintains a network of volunteers trained in disaster-related legal needs. When the governor declares a state of emergency, volunteers are mobilized in the affected locality to provide information about insurance issues, landlord-tenant problems, home repair contracts, home solicitation, lost legal documents, and other legal issues resulting from the disaster or emergency. Over the years our volunteers have responded to hurricanes, flooding, and tornadoes. For more information, contact program chair Glen H. Sturtevant Jr. at gsturtevant@hunton.com or (804) 788-8260, or board liaison J. Barrett Lucy at barret_lucy@gentrylocke.com or (540) 983-9300.

Since 1984, the YLC's **No Bills Night** has provided Virginians the opportunity to discuss legal issues for free with an attorney by telephone. To make this program available to as many communities as possible, the YLC has divided the state into twelve regions, each of which hosts its own No Bills Night. Although the volunteer attorneys cannot provide individuals with legal advice, they give guidance and, in most cases, direct people to agencies or other organizations that are in a position to provide relief. For more information about the program and each of its regions, contact statewide chair William W. Brock at wirt_brock@gentrylocke.com or (540) 983-9332, or board liaison Gerald E. Mabe III at gemabe@wytheco.org or (276) 223-4130.

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For several years, the YLC **Domestic Violence Safety Project** has worked to combat domestic violence in Virginia. Its projects have included the development, distribution, and translation into Spanish of more than two hundred thousand Domestic Violence Safety Brochures and Legal Pamphlets to victims of domestic violence statewide. Volunteers have also provided pro bono representation to domestic violence victims in protective order, child custody, and support cases. The program offers free training with CLE credit for attorney volunteers. For more information, contact committee chair Timothy M. Mayfield at tmayfield@nadamslaw.com or (540) 667-1330, or board liaison Kenneth L. Alger II at kenalger@shentel.net or (540) 459-6129.

Finally, the YLC's Pro Bono Commission serves as a think tank for the YLC on pro bono issues and periodically reviews the YLC's pro bono services to determine whether there are unmet needs to be addressed. The commission has also reported on the pro bono activities of Virginia law firms in the April 2007 edition of *Virginia Lawyer*. (http://www.vsb.org/docs/valawyer magazine/vl0407_access.pdf) For more information on the commission's activities, contact chair Samantha Ahuja at ahujas@gtlaw.com or (202) 530-8552, or board liaisons Christy Kiely and Ken Alger.

Virginia State Bar Harry L. Carrico Professionalism Course

See dates and registration information at <http://www.vsb.org>.

YLC Board Elections

At its Annual Meeting on June 19, 2009, the Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference will be electing members to the Board of Governors. Three At-Large positions as well as seats in the following districts are up for election:

| District | Circuits |
|----------|-------------------|
| 2 | 2, 4 |
| 3 | 6, 11, 12, 13, 14 |
| 4 | 17, 18 |
| 5 | 19, 31 |
| 8 | 23, 25 |
| 9 | 10, 21, 22, 24 |
| 10 | 27, 28, 29, 30 |

All nomination are due on May 1, 2009 and any letter of interest or nomination should be sent to:

Daniel L. Gray
Immediate Past President
Cooper Ginsberg Gray PLLC
10201 Lee Highway, Suite 520
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 934-1480; Fax: 703-280-4370; dgray@cgglawyers.com

Learn more about the Young Lawyers Conference at
<http://www.vsb.org/site/conferences/ylc/>

Seeking Nominations

The Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference is seeking nominations for the **R. Edwin Burnette Jr. Young Lawyer of the Year Award**.

This award honors an outstanding young Virginia lawyer who has demonstrated dedicated service to the YLC, the profession and the community.

The nomination deadline is May 1. Nominations should be sent to:

Daniel L. Gray
Immediate Past President
Cooper Ginsberg Gray PLLC
10201 Lee Highway, Suite 520
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 934-1480; Fax: 703-280-4370; dgray@cgglawyers.com