

Pro Bono Work Honored in Winchester

Attorneys in the Winchester area have been recognized for pro bono work through the Blue Ridge Legal Services Pro Bono Referral Program. The awards were presented at the annual meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Bar Association.

Awards went to James R. Larrick Jr., Marilyn A. Solomon, and the members of law firm Buchbauer & McGuire PC — Peter W. Buchbauer, James J. McGuire, Lawrence P. Vance, and Kelly C. Ashby. Thomas A. Louthan, a past president of the bar association, also received an award for his help with a recent pro bono recruitment drive.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



2009

**LEWIS F. POWELL JR.
PRO BONO AWARD**

and the

**2009 Oliver White Hill
Law Student
Pro Bono Award**

The deadline for receipt of nominations by the bar is 5:00 PM, Friday, February 13, 2009.

For more information visit

[http://www.vsb.org/
site/pro_bono/](http://www.vsb.org/site/pro_bono/)

[resources-for-attorneys/](http://www.vsb.org/site/pro_bono/resources-for-attorneys/) and scroll to Awards & Honors.

Legal Aid Programs Offer Foreclosure Assistance

Virginia legal aid programs are joining other organizations in offering assistance to people faced with losing their homes because of unmanageable mortgages, often obtained through subprime loans.

Foreclosure assistance programs give lawyers a place to send people who come to them for help, and a place to provide pro bono help.

Some legal aid programs have obtained newly available federal funds to provide attorneys, paralegals, and housing counselors trained to assist people in foreclosure who meet the legal aid income guidelines.

The mortgage assistance staff helps the homeowner negotiate with lenders and evaluate the benefits of declaring bankruptcy. They also refer clients to other agencies to help with housing and social services where needed.

The legal aid-based services currently are available in at least two hard-hit areas — Southwest and Northern Virginia. Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society is offering the service by phone and mail through its Castlewood and Christiansburg offices. Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV) has created a Foreclosure Legal Assistance Project.

Foreclosures are increasing precipitously throughout the state. According to figures from the Virginia Housing Development Authority, Virginia had only 3,300 homes in the foreclosure process in mid-2006. In spring 2008, 18,300 were in foreclosure statewide. More than 10,000 of those were in Northern Virginia.

James A. Ferguson, executive director of LSNV, said the decline began with

holders of subprime mortgages who could not keep up the payments, but now has expanded to other homeowners who have fallen behind because they lost their jobs or are tapped out by increased fuel costs and inflation.

Larry Harley, director of Southwest Virginia Legal Aid, added to that list people who fall ill or whose families break up.

The foreclosure crisis has affected working people who normally don't meet the poverty guidelines required for legal aid assistance, but now need legal and economic help. Ferguson said that suburban residents are now facing crises that used to be limited to the poorest people. "Our focus is low-income folks," but with the foreclosure activity "we also are seeing people from all across the economic spectrum."

Local governmental bodies such as the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors are trying to address the problem to avert more foreclosures before anticipated federal relief arrives. In Northern Virginia, blocks of seemingly affluent neighborhoods contain a handful of occupied houses among many that are abandoned.

Information on other programs that offer foreclosure assistance can be found on websites sponsored by Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine (<http://virginiaforeclosureprevention.com/index.asp>) and Attorney General Robert F. McDonnell (http://www.oag.state.va.us/CONSUMER/mortgage_Foreclosure_Prevention.html).

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http://www.vsb.org/site/pro_bono/resources-for-attorneys