

Advocates for Cancer Patients, Founders of Pro Bono Referral Program Recognized for Service

The Lewis F. Powell Jr. Pro Bono Award this year will be shared by the Legal Information Network for Cancer and two lawyers, M. Steven Weaver and Glenn M. Hodge, who helped start what has been called one of the most successful pro bono programs in the nation.

The Legal Network for Cancer, or LINC, is dedicated to helping cancer patients and their loved ones with non-medical needs. It operates in the Richmond area and has helped uncounted people with assistance and referral to legal, financial, and community resources.

Weaver and Hodge are members of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bar Association and helped start the association's Pro Bono Referral Program in 1982. They have served continuously as leaders of the program for thirty-two years.

In her letter nominating LINC, Alexandra D. Bowen noted that the organization provides a long list of services to cancer patients, survivors, and their families. Those services include securing insurance coverage, securing disability income, preparing powers of attorney, preparing advance medical directives, and assisting with estate planning. LINC recruits volunteer attorneys and assists in training them in such areas as drafting life planning documents, handling Social Security appeals, debtor's rights, landlord tenant law, and the Affordable Care Act.

"LINC provides an embrace to frightened people during their most difficult times and gives them peace of mind," Bowen wrote. "The legal and financial services that LINC provides enable cancer patients and their families to have dignity and a better quality of life in their time of need."

Weaver, of Clark & Bradshaw, and Hodge, of Wharton, Aldhizer & Weaver, were nominated by John E. Whitfield, executive director of Blue Ridge Legal Services Inc. (BRLS).

He noted that "at least every other month for the last thirty-two years, Steve Weaver and Glenn Hodge have come to the BRLS legal aid office in Harrisonburg and met with BRLS's legal staff to review and discuss potential pro bono referrals to the bar association teams." He wrote that they have contributed hundreds of hours to meeting with the legal aid staff and have mentored many staff attorneys.

Thanks in part to the leadership of Weaver and Hodge, the organization has received a number of state and national awards. It has closed about 3,000 cases with more than 23,000 hours of donated legal services during the years Weaver and Hodge have served as leaders.



Staff members at LINC include Lindsey Leach, development, special events, and volunteer coordinator; Cris Whitman Gantz, LINC clients services director and attorney; Denise Kranich, executive director; Karen Miller, client services assistant; and Heather Bland, client services assistant.

"These two leaders have continued — quietly, effectively, faithfully, without fanfare — to make sure the Pro Bono Referral Program they helped to create thirty-two years ago continues to fulfill its mission of helping to ensure equal justice to all regardless of their ability to pay," Whitfield wrote.

The Powell award was established by the Special Committee on Access to Legal Services of the Virginia State Bar to honor attorneys and attorney groups that have made outstanding pro bono contributions. The award will be presented October 22 during the Virginia State Bar Pro Bono Conference and Celebration in Portsmouth.



Sharing in this year's Lewis F. Powell Jr. Award are M. Steven Weaver (left) and Glenn M. Hodge who helped start the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bar Association's Pro Bono Referral Program in 1982.