

Lawyers Helping Lawyers:

You can help save a life, and a career

by Susan Pauley

I am often asked, “What happens when someone calls Lawyers Helping Lawyers and expresses concern about a colleague?” What happens depends on the facts, and the willingness of concerned parties to seek help for the impaired attorney.

When someone contacts the program director or a volunteer, we need to know as much as possible from the caller. We must determine whether judges, courthouse staff, office staff, or attorneys who interact frequently with the individual, can corroborate or add information—and be willing to help. Our network discreetly gathers information and identifies others who can help. This process takes time, but helps us rule out the possibility of a frivolous report.

“Confidential help” does not equal “no information and no action.” Addiction is an illness characterized by denial and feelings of shame and guilt. The lawyer often does not recognize what is happening to him. Even if he acknowledges trouble, he often denies the relevance of alcohol or drugs. Breaking through denial is most effective when that information comes from the individuals who experienced or witnessed the problems, especially when the impaired lawyer respects those individuals.

Confidentiality is assured through the Lawyers Helping Lawyers program guidelines and the ethical behavior of trained volunteers and staff. It is afforded to those who contact us and help us by Rule 8.3 of the Rules of Professional Conduct—Reporting Professional Conduct:

“(a) A lawyer having reliable information that another lawyer has committed a violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct that raises a substantial question as to that lawyer’s honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer shall inform the appropriate authority.

(b) This Rule does not require disclosure of information otherwise protected by Rule 1.6 or information gained by a lawyer or judge who is a member of an approved lawyer’s assistance program, or who is a trained intervenor or volunteer for such a program or committee, or who is otherwise cooperating in a particular assistance effort, when such information is obtained for the purposes of fulfilling the recognized objectives of the program.”

Your willingness to contact and work with Lawyers Helping Lawyers may save the life and career of a colleague. If you are concerned about someone, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, call us at our confidential numbers: (804) 644-3212 or 1-800-838-8358.

Susan Pauley has been the program director for the Lawyers Helping Lawyers program since October of 1995. Prior to that she worked as Substance Abuse Division Director for New River Valley Community Services Board; Executive Director of Bethany Hall, a residential program in Roanoke for women with addictions; Outreach Counselor for Omni House, the outpatient substance abuse services program of Roanoke Valley Community Services Board; and Placement Coordinator and Mental Health Tech with Roanoke Valley Psychiatric Center. She worked in the field of addictions treatment and program management for 22 years. Pauley has a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Roanoke College, and an associate degree in Mental Health Technology.



The Honorable Donald H. Kent, of Richmond, (right) received the Criminal Law Section’s Harry L. Carrico Award at the section’s 31st Annual Seminar in Williamsburg on February 16. Kent served as Judge of the Circuit Court of Alexandria from 1974–1996. He was Chief Judge of the Court from 1984–1996. Judge Kent most recently served as Counsel to the Judicial Inquiry & Review Commission from 1997 until his retirement in December 2000. He now serves as Substitute General District Court Judge in Henrico County.

The award, which was established by the section in 1992 in honor of Justice Carrico, recognizes a singular and unique contribution to the improvement of the criminal justice system in Virginia.

LOCAL & SPECIALTY BAR ELECTIONS

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Linda Gale Willis, Vice President
Dirk Barron Padgett, Secretary-Treasurer
Randy Calvin Krantz, Conference Representative

Hampton Bar Association:

Robert Elliott Long, President
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Nell Lee Ford, Secretary
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IN MEMORIAM

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January 1941–August 2000

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Norfolk
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Philip DeB. Rome

Richmond
October 1946–December 2000

Harlan Brown Williams

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April 1966–September 2000

The Virginia State Bar acknowledges the following lawyers for their recent participation in the VSB Speakers Bureau.

Julie Currin: New Kent Middle School, New Kent

Nancy Parr: Western Branch Middle School, Chesapeake

Lawrence McClaffery: Park View High School, Sterling

Darrell Allen: Park View High School, Sterling

Jeff Hanley: Stephens City Kiwanis Club, Stephens City

Frances Goldman: Virginia State Board of Elections, Richmond

Heather Vovakes: This Valley Works Center for Employment
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If you know a group in your community that could benefit from this valuable resource, please contact Jennifer Sparger at 804-775-0586, or e-mail sparger@vsb.org.

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