

Benzinger is Local Bar Leader of the Year

For her outstanding service to the Arlington County Bar Association, to her fellow attorneys and to her community, the Virginia State Bar's Conference of Local Bar Associations has named Mary M. Benzinger as its Local Bar Leader of the Year for 2003.

The annual award recognizes past and presently active leaders in their local bar associations who have continued to offer important service to the bench, bar and public. This year's award was presented during the state bar's annual meeting in Virginia Beach on June 20.

A graduate of Georgetown University and the Washington College of Law at American University, Benzinger has practiced civil litigation with her husband, Raymond, in the firm of Benzinger & Benzinger P.C. in Arlington since 1989. Since joining the Arlington County Bar Association that same year, she has, in the words of the nominating committee, *demonstrated outstanding dedication and achievement. Never in our combined recollection has she declined any request to provide service to the Arlington bar. She has always given her best effort to any task, and her efforts have always been superlative in quality and scope.* They include:

- **The Earl E. Shaffer Mentoring Program**, a program that she co-founded with fellow attorney, Paul Barnett. The project seeks to pair newer or less experienced practitioners with more learned ones in a given practice area. There are currently 40 mentors on the bar's mentor list.
- **Christmas in April**, a nationwide initiative to repair houses for the indigent and elderly. Benzinger has chaired this project for the bar every year since 1992.
- **The New Member Welcome Packet**, a more-than-just-a-welcoming-letter, the



packet includes information that truly reaches out to new attorneys. Benzinger devised the packets as part of her job as membership chair.

- **The ACBA Database**, a computer database containing membership and lawyer referral information that Benzinger constructed as a service to bar members and to the public.

Additionally, she continues to serve as a faculty member for the Continuing Legal Education seminars on appellate practice, juvenile and domestic relations district court civil practice and Internet evidence in family law practice.

Outside her numerous bar activities and legal practice, she acts as medical guardian for a local woman with cerebral palsy, and is an alumni admissions representative in the Washington area for Phillips Academy, a distinguished college preparatory school that she attended in Andover, Massachusetts.

Beginning in July 2003, Benzinger will serve as president-elect of ACBA, a 3-year obligation that will take her through a term as president in 2004 and as past-president in 2005.

LOCAL & SPECIALTY BAR ELECTIONS

Bristol Bar Association:

Elizabeth Faith Dillow, President
Dennis Lee Godfrey, President-elect
Angela Dawn Figueiras, Sec.-Treas.
Christen Wood Burkholder, Conf. Rep.

Bar Association, City of Richmond:

James K. Cluverius, President
Stephen Earl Baril, President-elect
Michael Nehemiah Herring,
Vice President
Cleo Elaine Powell,
Hon. Vice President
Hugh McCoy Fain, III, Sec.-Treas.
Stephen Earl Baril, Conf. Rep.

Salem-Roanoke County Bar Association:

John Weber, III, President
William Hitchcock Lindsey,
1st Vice President
Marian Felicia Aimee Kelley,
2nd Vice President
Aaron Tremayne Lavinder, Sec.-Treas.
Thomas Edward Bowers,
Judge Advocate
Joseph B. Obenshain, Conf. Rep.

Scott County Bar Association:

Michael Fred McClellan Carrico,
President
Kenneth G. Deskins, Vice President
John Charles Kilgore, Sec.-Treas.
John Charles Kilgore, Conf. Rep.

Virginia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers:

Bruce R. Williamson, Jr., President
Steven David Benjamin,
President-elect
Esther Jeanette Windmueller,
Vice President
Charles Thomas Turbeville, Jr.,
Secretary
Richard Ernest Gardiner, Treasurer

Local and Specialty Bar Associations Honored for Public Service Projects

The Conference of Local Bar Associations' Awards of Merit competition recognizes outstanding public service projects of local and specialty bars in Virginia. Awards of Merit are the highest awards given and Certificates of Achievement recognize other programs and projects of high distinction. The awards were presented at the Bar Leaders Breakfast and Annual Meeting on Friday, June 20, in Virginia Beach.

The **Bar Association of the City of Richmond** received an Award of Merit for its Independence of the Judiciary Symposium. Co-sponsored by the University of Richmond Law School, the symposium on judicial independence was held on March 21, 2003, at the university's Camp Concert Hall to mark the retirement of Virginia Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico. Distinguished speakers and panelists included the Honorable William Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court; the Honorable Kenneth Starr, former Solicitor General; the Honorable J. Harvie Wilkinson, judge of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals; and former and current deans of area law schools. More than 600 attended the event, which was taped for later broadcast on C-Span.

The **Fairfax Bar Association** received two Awards of Merit. The first of the two projects receiving this award was Jazz for Justice, a fundraising event that combined the efforts of members of the Fairfax Bar with those of musicians from the George Mason University Jazz Ensemble. The jazz ensemble offered their annual concert as a fundraiser in return for bar members selling tickets and publicizing it to the community. The sellout concert, held on November 20, 2002, at GMU raised a total of \$4500 to benefit the university's music department and the Fairfax Bar Foundation.

The second project to receive an Award of Merit was the Comparative Jurisdiction Seminar, a joint initiative of the Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax and Prince William County bar associations. This groundbreaking seminar held October 18, 2002, compared judicial procedures unique to each judicial district and encouraged understanding of these procedures. Judges and attorneys from the area met on October 18, 2002, at the Fairfax Government Center for a panel discussion and break-out sessions that benefited a large segment of Northern Virginia's legal community.

The Fairfax Bar Association also received two Certificates of Achievement for projects related to judicial selection and evaluation. The first, the Online Judicial Evaluation Program, offered bar members the opportunity to evaluate judges online who are scheduled for reappointment in a given year. The second, Online Judicial Screening, allowed members to screen judicial candidates online. Both projects encourage increased participation by bar members and saved mailing and administrative costs for the bar.

The **Henrico County Bar Association** received a Certificate of Achievement for its education committee programs. Under the direction of its education committee, the Henrico County Bar created three separate, but related, programs to assist school-age children in the county. In the first, School Supply Challenge, members of the bar teamed with members of the Henrico Business Council to raise money for school supplies for the children of Highland Springs Elementary School. The second project, entitled Project Read Now, was a mentoring program that paired volunteer lawyers from the bar with children at Highland Springs Elementary School. Lawyers met with the children twice a month to enforce and improve reading skills. The third and final project was a Mock Interview Program, involving high school juniors and seniors from the J.R. Tucker High School. Forty volunteer lawyers met with students in April to teach them interviewing skills for college and future employment.

The **Norfolk & Portsmouth Bar Association** (NPBA) received two Awards of Merit for its projects, Kids in Crisis: Community-Based Solutions Town Hall Meeting and the 12th annual Legal Food Frenzy.

Under the direction of attorney Kelly St. Clair and the Honorable M. Randolph Carlson III, and with a grant awarded by the Virginia Law Foundation, the NPBA held the Kids in Crisis town hall meeting at the Norview Middle School on April 3, 2003. More than 250 students attended this event moderated by local news anchor Barbara Ciara. The meeting focused on issues of youth crime and violence in the community, and brought together local citizens, law enforcement personnel, social services professionals and members of the legal community to discuss these important issues. The event was videotaped for future use by the school district.

In its 12th year, the Legal Food Frenzy is another program coordinated and sponsored by the NPBA to collect food for the hungry and working poor. The project pits local law firms against one another in a spirited competition to collect the most food for the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia. Top winners in each category were the firm of **Vandeventer Black LLP** (large firm); **Roussos, Langhorne & Carlson PLC** (small firm and repeat winner); and the overall winner, collecting more than 10,000 lbs. of