

THE VIRGINIA LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE

Zaida Cordero Thompson, Chair

For 20 years, the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service has provided effective and quality legal assistance to the citizens of the Commonwealth, as well as many other states and Canada. The VLRS has made more than 42,000 referrals this past bar year and assisted many more with referrals to public service or government agencies. As an integral part of the bar's mission, the VLRS is the public service arm of the bar and strives to promote the image of the legal profession.

The VLRS completed the fiscal year with a surplus of \$15,000. This was primarily accomplished through a revised yellow page advertising strategy. The VLRS elected to forego the convenience and one-stop shopping of national yellow page companies. To save money the VLRS now contracts with individual yellow page vendors. The service maintains the same coverage at approximately one-third the cost. The VLRS converts revenues into expanded marketing formats—like placing VLRS information on-line at multimedia, interactive, touch-screen kiosks located in the Richmond metropolitan areas. The kiosks assist out-of-town travelers and people new to the community.

Expanded advertising includes VLRS news in Virginia State Bar section newsletters and the placement of the application in the *Virginia Lawyer*, the *Virginia Lawyer Register* and the *Local Bar Connection*, as space permits. More than 90 new attorney members have used the application. Attorneys may also go to the VSB Web site for an application and membership information.

Twice a year, the VLRS attends the VSB admission and orientation ceremonies for new attorneys and participates in the accompanying first day in practice activities. Three hundred to eight hundred admittees return home with VLRS information.

The service continues to cooperate with the Virginia State Bar's Young Lawyers Conference and The Virginia Bar Association's Young Lawyers disaster relief efforts. In times of disaster the VLRS "800" number is the hotline for free legal advice to affected citizens.

This past year the VLRS staff has hosted a series of brown bag luncheons for the purpose of updating and learning more about specific areas of law to better aid in making accurate referrals. Attorney members are invited to come and share their expertise as well as new information regarding their specific areas of practice.

Attorney satisfaction surveys were sent with renewal applications during the past bar year. The members' feedback is used as a guide to better meeting the needs of our panel members. Also, to be of greater assistance to our panel members, the service is in the process of updating and clarifying the VLRS brochure and application. The VLRS Committee is assuming a more active role in the disciplinary process involving panel members and has clarified the explanation of administrative hold for those attorneys whose referral eligibility has been put on hold while disciplinary matters are being resolved.

A special thanks goes to committee member David Pugh, for his tireless efforts in conjunction with the Business Marketing class at Averett College in Danville, Virginia. His guidance and shepherding of this project greatly assisted the VLRS in designing better marketing strategies.

Other committee members to be thanked for their time and talents are Ronald Geiersbach, Bradley Cavedo, Sally Andrews, Richard Stahl, John Tran, David Denton, Catherine Lee, Eric Spencer and Steve Whitaker. Additional thanks to the fine VLRS staff—Barbara O. Allen, Director, Victoria Meadows, Toni Dunson and Erin Weston.

