VIRGINIA LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE

Sally James Andrews, chair

For more than twenty years, the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service (VLRS) has provided effective and quality legal assistance to the citizens of the commonwealth, the United States and Canada. The VLRS is a public service arm of the Virginia State Bar and strives to promote the image of the legal profession.

Last year, the VLRS received more than thirty-two thousand calls and made more than nineteen thousand referrals. The VLRS assisted many more individuals with referrals to public service or governmental agencies. VLRS representatives attended the Virginia State Bar Annual Meeting, the Young Lawyers Conference Admission and Orientation ceremonies and many local bar meetings. As a result of a targeted membership drive in areas of the state where VLRS representation has historically been low or non-existent, more than sixty new attorneys joined the VLRS for the first time. The current membership is approximately one thousand.

Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell Sr. has emphasized the need for attorneys to help make affordable legal counsel available to parties in child custody cases. A special study commission was appointed to review this issue and, as a result, two pilot programs will soon commence in Richmond and Harrisonburg. The VLRS will be an integral part of this project.

The VLRS continues to be self-sustaining. Approximately 26 percent of the consultation fees are now collected by credit card. The success of VLRS could not have been possible without the efforts of the VLRS staff: Barbara O. Allen, director; Toni B. Dunson; Sheree Patterson; and Lily Norman. After many years of service on the committee, including one year as chair, I will be rotating off the committee. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the staff and the committee members.

A special thanks goes to all committee members: Catherine Ann Lee, vice chair; Cheryl Avery-Hargrove; Mary Margaret Benzinger; Michael D'Wayne Clower; Francis Xavier Lillis; Kevin Edward Martingayle; Neil Edward McNally; Jay C. Paul; Daniel Leigh Rosenthal; Richard Julian Stahl; and John Minh Tran.