

We are pleased to bring you news of the recent Fairfax Bar Association Pro Bono Awards. Consistent with Bar Council's wishes to encourage in-depth pro bono related stories, we are also pleased to bring you this month's commissioned article by Larry T. Harley, who is the executive director of Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, a licensed legal aid program headquartered in Marion, Virginia. As noted in previous editions of the Virginia Lawyer, the bar

hopes to publish reports from every corner of the state and it values those that are member-authored, as well as those conducted in interview format. Inspiring narratives about lawyers, colleagues, or mentors that deal with pro bono and reduced-fee work, court appointed cases, the initiation of public service programs, and those who have elected to serve in undercompensated roles as government or legal aid lawyers are particularly welcome.

Fairfax Bar Honors Pro Bono Attorneys

Chief Justice Harry Carrico of the Virginia Supreme Court was the featured speaker at the Fairfax Bar Association lunch on September 27, 2000, honoring its pro bono volunteers. The Pro Bono Program presented special awards for outstanding pro bono efforts:

- **Michael Marino** and **Katherine Hedges** of Hunton & Williams were both honored as Pro Bono Lawyers of the Year. Marino organized lawyers of his firm to staff an Employment Law Project at the Franconia Family Resource Center. Hedges has contributed to various pro bono programs over the years including, in conjunction with Legal Services, both a housing and wills project.
- The efforts of **Hogan & Hartson**, Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year winner, in conjunction with Legal Services, sent lawyers each month to the Kennedy Shelter to provide legal assistance and referral information to the homeless. These efforts were under the auspices of the Pro Bono Neighborhood Outreach Program.
- **Andrea Bridgeman** of Freddie Mac Corporation received the James Keith Award for her longtime devotion to pro bono work and community service. Bridgeman assists the legal department's efforts to support Legal Services of Northern Virginia programs. James Keith, a former Circuit Court Judge and long-time volunteer to Legal Services, also attended the lunch.

- **The National Capitol Area Paralegal Association** was honored for its longtime dedication to pro bono projects including the Uncontested Divorce Project, where paralegals interview and screen potential clients at a monthly clinic. Volunteer paralegals also help to provide intake and legal assistance through the Neighborhood Outreach Program, which assists low-income clients in convenient, comfortable and accessible sites.



(left to right): Gerald Gilbert, managing partner of Hogan & Hartson; Andrea Bridgeman, assistant general counsel, legal division, Freddie Mac Corporation; Katherine Hedges and Michael Marino of Hogan & Hartson; and Lori Thompson, chair of the Pro Bono Committee of the National Capitol Area Paralegal Association.

A Life of Legal Service: "... and justice for all."

by Larry T. Harley



Larry T. Harley, (left) executive director of Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, and Barry L. Proctor.

At the time, it did not occur to me that my first job with legal aid would turn out to be just one thread in a rich tapestry of public service. I've joked that I accepted that first job in 1975, a paralegal position paying \$50 per week, solely for the prestige and "big bucks." Actually, I accepted it because it was my ticket to the world of using law in public service, an endeavor shared by many in both the public and private sector of our profession.

Nineteen of my twenty-one years as an attorney have been spent working for legal aid. This work has given me the

opportunity to represent hundreds of low-income people who have persevered against odds that would have humbled most of us. It has given me the chance to collaborate with some of Virginia's most dedicated and talented attorneys. Fulfilling and always challenging, this line of work is my way of living out that phrase "... and justice for all."

Like most people who work for legal aid for any length of time, I've enjoyed a wide variety of practice experiences. Not many jobs enable one to get experience with

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The Community Tax Law Project Needs Your Help

Our unique program provides free legal advice and representation to low income Virginia residents in tax disputes with federal, state and local tax agencies. The project assists the indigent and the working poor. Taxpayers with income at or below 250% of the federal poverty level (approximately \$42,000 for a family of four) are eligible for our pro bono services. Founded in 1992 as a Virginia 501(c)(3) organization, The Community Tax Law Project (CTLP) was the first independent program of its kind in the nation.

We are actively recruiting volunteer attorneys from all areas of the state. Clients in rural areas of Virginia, including Southwest Virginia and the Eastern Shore, are especially in need of legal assistance. Additionally, we are looking for Spanish-speaking attorneys or attorneys with support staff who are willing to interpret for our increasing number of Hispanic clients.

CTLP is currently working on three specific initiatives: informing new workers, including participants in welfare-to-work programs, about tax issues related to their employment status; educating U.S. newcomers about their tax obligations and representing them in contested tax matters; and assisting victims of domestic abuse in matters involving collection of joint tax debts, innocent spouse relief, and re-entering the tax system after many years of not working.

The Project has a wide range of resources available to its volunteers. CTLP staff members provide in-house technical assistance to our pro bono attorneys. The Project also offers practice aids as well as CLE programs in areas of low income tax practice that are also relevant to volunteers' private practices. CTLP provides malpractice insurance coverage to all members of its pro bono panel.

To learn more about this nationally recognized Virginia program, please contact Elaine Javonovich at (804) 358-5855 or e-mail ej@ctlp.org.

Resources

Virginia State Bar

For updates on free or nominal fee CLEs related to Public Interest and Poverty Law, visit the VSB Web site at www.vsb.org/probono. An *Organizing Tool* for local public service committees and an *On-line Guide* with listings of model programs and volunteer opportunities for lawyers and affiliated professionals can also be downloaded from the site.

Virginia Poverty Law Center

The Richmond-based Virginia Poverty Law Center (VPLC) offers training and support to Virginia's licensed legal aid programs and to the hundreds of members of the private bar across the Commonwealth who sit on local legal aid referral panels. Because VPLC also directly represents

individual clients, financial donations that lawyers make to it count under the voluntary "in lieu of service" provision of Rule 6.1 of the new Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct. Attorneys interested in donating time or funds are welcome to contact center director Steve Myers at (804) 782-9430 or steve@vplc.org. VPLC volunteers and contributors may request that their names be added to the mailing list for the center's informative monthly, the "Virginia Poverty Law Review."

VPLC offers specific volunteer opportunities to lawyers interested in helping victims of domestic violence in civil matters in Central Virginia, in the following communities: Cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Powhatan, Prince George or Surry. Attorneys may choose from several options, depending on interest and time available. For information, please contact Nechama Masliansky at (804) 782-9430 or nechama@vplc.org.

Web Postings for Legal Nonprofits

The American Corporate Counsel Association (ACCA) and the Pro Bono Institute at Georgetown University Law Center co-sponsor CorporateProBono.Org (CPBO), a national initiative designed to exponentially increase the amount of pro bono work performed by in-house counsel. CPBO's Web site includes a database through which legal nonprofits can post and corporate counsel can search pro bono volunteer opportunities. CPBO encourages legal services providers and pro bono and public interest programs to post Profile Records containing basic information about their mission and resources, as well as Project Records describing their pro bono opportunities. By clicking on "Projects & Providers," in-house counsel can then search these records by geographic location and practice area for suitable matches. Although CPBO primarily serves corporate counsel, the initiative's founders are also committed to maximizing the benefits of CPBO for pro bono providers and their clients. For more information, visit www.corporateprobono.org or www.cpbo.org or e-mail CPBO staff at cpbo@probonoinst.org.

CharityFocus Designs Web sites for Nonprofits

The California-based "CharityFocus" helps small nonprofits design individualized Web sites. The "standard" package is free and nominal fees are charged for advanced features. Visit <http://www.charityfocus.org> for more information.

Visit the Pro Bono page on the VSB Web site for pro bono training and opportunities listed at www.vsb.org/probono/.

A Life of Legal Service: “. . . and Justice for all.” *continued from page 38*

class actions and lobbying (neither of which is currently permitted by federally funded legal aids), injunctions, and testifying before the General Assembly—not to mention divorce cases involving the financial support of aging chimpanzees, and negotiating with gun-toting landlords. By most any measure the experiences have been diverse.

The pathways taken by those attorneys committed to access to justice are, much like the threads in a cloth, varied, and woven together. Thousands of private and government attorneys and over 100 legal aid attorneys weave their stories together to make “. . . and justice for all” meaningful.

Much of my story of public service is intertwined with that of Barry Proctor, a private attorney in Abingdon, Virginia. Barry joined our legal aid program in 1982. After two years we decided to try something different. He and I left legal aid and opened a private law office. Our goal was to serve those working people just above legal aid's poverty guidelines; sort of a “legal clinic” approach. It was tough. I vividly recall living in an apartment above the office on Halloween of 1984. I had not a dollar (our secretary's salary doubled mine that first year), and hence had no candy. Trick-or-treaters methodically rang the doorbell. I turned off the porch light. Trick-or-treaters still rang the doorbell, and I realized that they could see the light of my television. Finally, I put a blanket over the television and me, and spent the evening in my makeshift tent in relative peace.

After two years in private practice I returned to legal aid, but Barry kept plugging away. Now, 15 years later, I look at the way he lives out “. . . and justice for all.” I am awestruck. Like many private attorneys, Barry participates in the pro bono and judicare programs of his area legal aid programs. He reduces his normal attorney fee for any illiterate client who enrolls in literacy classes. He reduces his normal fees for wills and advance directives when clients make corresponding contributions to charities of their choice. He is active on the court appointment list for criminal cases and has become the circuit's most experienced capital defense attorney. A portion of my own pro bono work is spent helping Barry when he has death penalty cases.

I love my work at legal aid, but I value equally the work of my friend Barry. There are many ways for each Virginia attorney to contribute to access to justice. It is the weaving together of our “. . .and justice for all” stories that makes the phrase mean something real. ☺

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It is a shame that sense of community and giving is lost on the individuals who cannot see past the opposing side of a case.

We should question individuals about why they feel that way and seek to change their minds. This doesn't mean that you have to preach to every person who makes a bad lawyer joke, but there is a point when we have to defend our profession. Pointing out the contributions our profession has made, from the drafting of our laws to protection of consumer rights, is one step toward changing the public's perception.

We as attorneys must make certain not to foster that attitude or condone it in any way. We should view every colleague—whether a solo practitioner, a large firm attorney, a criminal defense attorney, or a civil rights lawyer—with the respect due every member of this profession. When an attorney belittles opposing counsel to his client, he is damaging his own reputation ultimately. Only when we make certain that we treat each other with the respect due will we turn the tide of public opinion. In the meantime, I'll be grateful for rubber banquet chicken and good company. ☺

Join a Practice Section

There are 21 specialty practice and substantive law sections of the Virginia State Bar.

For more information and a registration form visit the bar's Web site at www.vsb.org/sections/

Spanish Translation of Senior Citizens Handbook Now Available



The Young Lawyers Conference of the Virginia State Bar announces the publication of a Spanish language translation of the *Senior Citizens Handbook: Laws & Programs Affecting Senior Citizens in Virginia*.

The translation was funded by grants from the American Bar Association and the Virginia Law Foundation. Individual copies of the Spanish version of the handbook may be ordered by sending \$2 to:

Maureen Stengel
Virginia State Bar
707 E. Main Street
Suite 1500
Richmond, VA 23219-2800.

Also available on-line at www.vsb.org/publications.

Visit www.vsb.org/publications/index.html for an on-line advertising media kit.