

Metro Pro Bono Advocate

A publication of the Pro Bono Committee of The Bar Association of the City of Richmond

Vol. 6, Issue 2

Spring 2005

Two related fundraising drives to benefit CVLAS target private bar

Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS) is partnering with the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation (GRBF) in a fundraising campaign that seeks donations from individual attorneys. The Law Week, May 2-6, 2005 telephone solicitation phase of the campaign follows joint letters about the effort that were mailed to attorneys in April. The Bar Association of the City of Richmond (RBA) recently conducted its own annual solicitation directly to area law firms seeking funds for CVLAS in the amount of \$50 for each firm lawyer. Last year, the RBA solicitation to firms resulted in nearly \$40,000 in contributions to CVLAS. Last year's joint drive by the GRBF and CVLAS resulted in about \$40,000 in contributions, for a total of about \$80,000 in donations to CVLAS from private lawyers.

Among individual lawyers reached by telephone in 2004, one in three donated to CVLAS through the GRBF drive. Contributions from the private bar to CVLAS make a critical difference. Legal aid is struggling with retrenchment due to overall loss of revenue, increased staff workloads, and reductions in staff com-

pensation. The program avoided involuntary staff layoffs but now operates with a staff reduced by more than one-third.

Your generosity can help CVLAS change its service delivery system to offset staff losses. The program is installing a new telephone and intake system to provide immediate legal advice to many clients when they call. CVLAS has hired a bilingual receptionist to ensure comparable services to clients with limited English proficiency (LEP). Through reorganization of its intake and delivery systems, CVLAS hopes to put more emphasis on preventive law, helping to solve more legal problems for clients before they escalate.

CVLAS is deeply grateful for donations and pledges of donations from lawyers, including attorneys in private practice, and from lawyers in public service.

The RBA's appeal to firms on behalf of CVLAS is ongoing. Inquiries may be addressed to Tara Casey, chair of the pro bono committee through the RBA office at 780-0700. Direct donations should be made payable to Central Virginia Legal Aid Society and sent to CVLAS at P.O. Box 12206, Richmond, VA 23241.

A letter from the Committee Chair

by Tara Louise Casey, Chair
RBA Pro Bono Committee

Sitting down to write my last column as chair of the Pro Bono Service Committee, I daydream about my place in this world, as a wife, daughter, sister, friend, as well as a lawyer. Oftentimes, I find myself conflicted in these roles, wanting to separate my professional life from my personal life. And, like many of you, I hopelessly wish for more hours in the day, so that I can spend time with my loved ones while also fulfilling obligations to my profession. I am not sure what the magical formula is for achieving balance but must confess to wondering now whether commitments really need to remain mutually exclusive. Perhaps, those spheres are mere subsets of a larger world, in which our obligations are much more universal than we imagine.

Regardless of how we spend our time, we are ultimately members of a community. That community includes our neighborhoods, our city, our region, our state, our nation and global concerns. And, this community expects at least one thing from each of us, regardless of our profession or familial status – we are expected to be good people. We are expected to care for each other, protect each other, help each other and be charitable with each other. We are expected to perform this important duty in all aspects of our lives, personally and professionally. Finally, we are expected to rise to this standard, even in the face of adversity or in a crowd of strangers.

This expectation is not a burden, but a challenge. For me, it is a challenge to be a better wife, daughter, sister, friend and lawyer. If I continually strive to be a good person, then I am naturally seeking a balance between work and play,

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Former Governor Gerald L. Baliles is one of many volunteers who will make phone calls again this year during the GRBF's telethon to raise funds for CVLAS. The solicitation will take place during Law Week.

Spanish translation of Pro Se civil litigation guide released

In 2002, the Bar Association of the City of Richmond (RBA) launched an exciting new project to address the special needs of the ever-growing pro se litigant population. In response to this complex situation, RBA created the Pro Se Education Project to assist the judiciary and litigants alike.

The Project creates educational materials to aid all pro se litigants with the preparation and presentation of their cases, regardless of their respective positions in the litigation. Judges, attorneys and community advocates collaborated on this challenge.

In 2003, the Project rolled out its inaugural pamphlet, "Your Guide to Civil Litigation in General District Court." This pamphlet provides information to pro se litigants about the basic procedures of civil litigation in the general district courts, from how to file a case to obtaining judgment. Thanks to the generosity of the Virginia Law Foundation and the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation, approximately 5,000 copies have been distributed to courts and advocacy agencies across the metropolitan Richmond area, free-of-charge.

In 2004, the Project produced its second pamphlet, "Your Guide to Landlord/Tenant Litigation." This pamphlet is designed to address the common issues that arise in the landlord/tenant relationship and provide information about the rights and obligations of either party. With assistance from lawyers and judges who are experts in the field, the Project created a fair and balanced pamphlet to enable all parties to negotiate the legal system and better protect their interests. Again, with the financial support of the

Virginia Law Foundation and the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation, the Project distributed this pamphlet in Fall 2004.

To expand its readership to the Spanish-speaking community, the Project enlisted the assistance of Ryan Frei, a third year law student at the University of Richmond, to translate the Project's first pamphlet into Spanish. Ryan, who studied Spanish at Cornell University and in Spain, worked at the Alexandria Public Defender's Office with Spanish speaking clients. His work was reviewed by Christina Reibel, an attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center, Patricia Michelsen-King, a Spanish-speaking interpreter, and her grandfather, Antonio Jose Cardenas. In March 2005, the translation was completed, and the publication of these new pamphlets is expected to occur this Spring with the financial assistance of the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation. The Project wishes to thank the tireless efforts of these volunteers; the fruit of their work will enable wider dissemination of the information provided in this popular pamphlet.

The Richmond Bar Association is proud of this cooperative project and the assistance it will provide to pro se litigants. Members and the public are encouraged to view the pamphlets online by going to www.richmondbar.org and clicking on court rules/resources. Although these pamphlets cannot replace legal representation, the Project hopes that they will educate and empower those who stand alone before the court. If you are interested in volunteering with the Project, or simply would like more information, please contact Tara Casey at 819-5506.

Virginia lawyers helping families

One of the greatest needs for pro bono representation is in the area of child custody and visitation. Because of cutbacks in funds, many legal aid societies provide only minimal representation in these cases. Virginia Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell Sr. has recognized this gap and commissioned a program known as "Virginia Lawyers Helping Families" to provide some representation for qualifying pro bono clients on a pilot basis. The Richmond model will commence in April 2005. A second pilot program will operate in Harrisonburg.

Locally, the program will collaborate with Central Virginia Legal Aid Society. Cases will be screened closely before acceptance with criteria to include client income eligibility, an attorney on the other side, and a history of domestic violence or some other extraordinary circumstance.

Volunteer attorneys will only represent the client in the specific custody or visitation matter, they may limit the representation to 50 hours a year, and they will be allowed to withdraw from the program or turn down a case for any reason. Representation on appeal is optional. Each attorney will be provided with a qualified mentor and legal malpractice insurance under the Commonwealth's risk management policy.

The Richmond pilot is currently seeking additional volunteers for this very important program. Anyone interested in participating should contact John M. Oakey Jr. at 804-775-4336 or joakey@mcguirewoods.com.

GRBF receives grant

The Greater Richmond Bar Foundation was recently awarded a \$20,000 grant from The Community Foundation *Serving Richmond and Central Virginia*. The funds will be used to support the Pro Bono Clearinghouse project, which matches non-profit organizations needing legal assistance with volunteer attorneys.

The Virginia State Bar's **15th Annual Pro Bono Conference** is scheduled for Thursday, May 12, 2005 at the University of Richmond School of Law. The theme for the day-long event is Special Issues in Immigration Law. Registration brochures may be downloaded from <http://www.vsb.org/probono/pbconf05.pdf>. There is a nominal fee of \$25 to cover costs of CLE materials. Approval is pending for 6 MCLE and 1.5 Ethics/Professionalism credits.

Two insightful books reveal much about the working poor in America

by Jay Speer, VA Poverty Law Center

I read two books recently that provide real insight into the “working poor” of America. *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* by David Shipler and *Nickled and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich. Who are the working poor? “*These are citizens for whom the American Dream is out of reach despite their willingness to work hard. Struggling to simply survive, they live so close to the edge of poverty that a minor obstacle, such as a car breakdown or a temporary illness, can lead to a downward financial spiral that can prove impossible to reverse.*”

David Shipler interviewed many Americans working low-wage jobs and he gives you an up close and personal look at their lives. “*Most of the people I write about in this book do not have the luxury of rage. They are caught in exhausting struggles. Their wages do not lift them far enough from poverty to improve their lives, and their lives, in turn, hold them back. The term by which they are usually described, ‘working poor,’ should be an oxymoron. Nobody who works hard should be poor in America.*” —from the *Introduction to The Working Poor*.

Barbara Ehrenreich decided to go undercover and experience the life of the working poor firsthand. “*How can any-*

one survive, let alone prosper, on \$6 to \$7 an hour? To find out, Ehrenreich moved from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, taking the cheapest lodgings available and accepting work as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing-home aide, and department store salesperson. She soon discovered that even the ‘lowliest’ occupations require exhausting mental and physical efforts. And one job is not enough; you need at least two if you intend to live indoors.”—from the *Introduction to Nickled and Dimed*.

I enjoyed both of these books and I think they would appeal to anyone not just a poverty lawyer. Although the working poor have been my clients for the last 18 years, these books had much to teach me about their lives. The working poor are all around us, they serve us food, clean our offices, and re-stock the shelves at the store. Read these books and decide for yourself if these people are being treated fairly by the American economic system.

Barbara Ehrenreich, who now resides in Virginia, has agreed to serve on the Honorary Committee for the Virginia Poverty Law Center’s photographic exhibition, *Through Different Eyes: The Faces of Poverty in Virginia*. For complete information, please go to www.vplc.org.

Letter from the Chair

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home and office, business suits and pajamas. I don’t have to feel divided between two lives. There is just one life, with one immutable expectation.

In this edition of the Metro Pro Bono Advocate, you will read of the pro bono opportunities available in the greater Richmond area. I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to give serious consideration to lending your time and talents to any one of them. Fortunately, our legal community contains numerous good people who regularly perform acts of great service and kindness. I encourage you to share in this spirit; whether it is with our award-winning Housing Law Program or the Domestic Violence Project, you should find an activity that suits your schedule and interests. Also, if you are a senior member of our profession, the Virginia State Bar’s new Emeritus Rule initiative may enable you to provide pro bono services regardless of your employment status; please see an article regarding this exciting new development in the upcoming newsletter for the Richmond Bar Association. If you should have a question about any of these programs, please feel free to contact me at tara.casey@usdoj.gov or 804-819-5506.

Pro Bono Committee Members:

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Marilynn Goss
Henry W. McLaughlin, III
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W. Benjamin Pace
Maya M. Eckstein
Gregory F. Holland
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Lawyer Palooza

Sit back with a cold brew and relax to the sounds of your favorite lawyer bands at this third annual fundraiser.

All proceeds benefit the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation’s pro bono and education projects.

FEATURED BANDS:

The Silverback Blues Burners
The Members

DATE: Thursday, May 26, 2005

TIME: 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Art Works Gallery
301 Hull Street

COST: \$20 per person (includes admission and beverages)

Tickets may be obtained by calling 780-2600 or may be purchased at the door.

RICHMOND METRO PRO BONO SAMPLER

Attorneys, please refer to the list below to learn more about the activity that interests you.

<u>Program</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
Appeal Bond Fund	Marcel Slag	643-1086
Community Tax Law Project	Elaine Javonovich	358-5855
LAJC Housing Law	Marcel Slag	643-1086
CVLAS Wills Program	Kathy Brigman	862-1100
Henrico Bar Association Pro Bono Volunteers	Christopher H. Macturk	762-9500
Hunton & Williams - Church Hill office	George Hettrick	775-2248
VBA-YLD/CVLAS Pro Bono Hotline	Coburn Beck, Sean Beard	788-8576, 788-8687
Pro Bono Clearinghouse (www.grbf.org)	Carol Murray	780-2600
Legal Information Network for Cancer (LINC)	Susheela Varky	662-5462
Virginia Poverty Law Center	Steve Myers	782-9430
VA Lawyers Helping Families	John Oakey, Jr.	775-4336
VBA-YLD Legal Services for the Mentally Ill	John W. Phelps	662-7242
VSF Young Lawyers Board Match	Jerry Hall	(703) 714-7630
VSF/VBA YLS Emergency Legal Services	Jeffrey Geiger	783-7248
Refugee and Immigration Services - Catholic Diocese of Richmond	Marilyn Breslow	355-4559

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The Bar Association of the
City of Richmond
P.O. Box 1213
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1213