

Metro Pro Bono Advocate

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

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Pro Bono Committee members participate in Wills for Heroes program

The Richmond Bar's Pro Bono Committee helped bring the Wills for Heroes Program to Richmond earlier this year, with two committee members organizing various aspects of the program. Wills for Heroes is a program jointly sponsored in Virginia by the VSB Young Lawyers Conference (YLC) and the VBA Young Lawyers Division (YLD) in conjunction with the local Bar, to provide wills, powers of attorney and medical directives to local emergency personnel. Wills for Heroes

signed up for an appointment with a lawyer to review her personal situation and have the necessary documents drafted. In all, approximately 145 first responders were assisted through the efforts of 60 plus volunteer attorneys, paralegals and legal secretaries.

The experience was meaningful for all involved. According to Chuck Seyfarth, RBA Pro Bono Committee member who organized the sessions for the Fire Department, "Wills for Heroes is a great Program.



was developed in response to the events of September 11th and has been successfully implemented elsewhere in many Virginia localities, including Arlington, Danville, Williamsburg, Roanoke and Norfolk.

In Richmond, the program served first-responders at the City of Richmond's Police Department, Sheriff's Department and Fire Department. The first portion of the program involved an educational session, where an estate planning attorney gave an overview of the program and the need for the estate planning documents it provides. Once an officer attended the educational session, she then

It offers members of the legal community the opportunity to give back to those who protect our communities on a daily basis."

Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to provide assistance to all jurisdictions in the metro Richmond area at this time. "Hopefully, we can have the program again next year for some of the other jurisdictions in the Richmond area," said Erin Whaley, chair of the organizing committee for Richmond. Other members of the Committee organizing the program included Stephanie Albright, Bryan Rhode, Christy Kiely, Carson Sullivan, Matthew Chmiel, and Chris Jones.

Housing Law program begins new volunteer cycle

On December 12, 2006, the Pro Bono Committee of the Richmond Bar Association and the Legal Aid Justice Center held their annual Pro Bono Housing Law training session. The seminar serves the dual purpose as training for the Pro Bono Housing Project's new volunteer attorneys and as a refresher course on Virginia Housing Law for the Program's veterans. All participants receive the benefit of the seminar's 3 hours of CLE credit. Williams Mullen hosted the training session for the second straight year.

Pro Bono Housing Project Chair, Ben Pace, reported that 13 new volunteers were trained at this year's session, with almost 20 total attendees participating. Among the firms represented were: Williams Mullen, Hunton & Williams, LeClair Ryan and McGuire Woods. Special thanks go out to the seminar's panel of lecturers: Marcel Slag of the Legal Aid Justice Center, Jim Naggles of the Virginia Poverty Law Center, and Marty Wegbreit of the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society.

The Pro Bono Housing Law Program, which is administered by the Legal Aid Justice Center and the Richmond Bar Association Pro Bono Committee, provides crucial pro bono services to indigent clients throughout the greater Richmond area who are facing the loss of housing or other basic leasehold services. Where a meritorious defense exists, pro bono housing law volunteers will represent these indigent tenants in their leasehold disputes. The Housing Project would not be possible without the dedication of its volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering for the program or want more information, please contact Ben Pace at 783-6932 or wpace@williamsmullen.com.

Local attorneys receive recognition for pro bono efforts

Two former members of the Richmond Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee recently received awards honoring their dedication to pro bono legal service. John M. Oakey, Jr. is the 2007 recipient of the Lewis F. Powell Pro Bono Award by the Virginia State Bar's Committee on Access to Legal Services. Tara Casey received a 2007 YWCA Outstanding Women Award.

While maintaining a busy law practice at McGuireWoods LLP, Mr. Oakey dedicated many hours to pro bono service. Since Mr. Oakey's retirement on December 31, 1999, he has been involved in many pro bono activities. A few examples of Mr. Oakey's pro bono work include: representation of clients through the Richmond Legal Aid Housing Program; prosecution of child support cases in Richmond for the Child Support Enforcement

Division of the Department of Social Services; representation of domestic violence victims in the Richmond area through the Richmond Domestic Violence Program; and service on the governing boards of the Legal Aid Justice Center, Central Virginia Legal Aid Society, Greater Richmond Bar Foundation,

Virginia Lawyers Helping Families, and Pro Bono Clearinghouse Program of the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation. A number of courts have appointed Mr. Oakey to represent needy clients who do not qualify for services at Central Virginia Legal Aid Society.

Tara Casey is an assistant U.S. Attor-

capacity, Ms. Casey provided leadership for the Richmond Bar's pro se education project and was instrumental in creating education pamphlets for General District Court and for Landlord/Tenant matters and in obtaining Spanish translations of the pamphlets. Ms. Casey is active in the Metropolitan Richmond

Women's Bar Association. She served as the Co-Chair of Public Service Committee for that organization. Ms. Casey was the coordinator of the Flagler House Curriculum Project for the Metropolitan Richmond Women's Bar Association, which provides women victims of abuse with information about their legal rights. Other pro bono service projects by Ms. Casey include participation on the Board of Directors for Children's Health Involving Parents, service on the ac-



Tara L. Casey, a recipient of the 2007 YWCA Outstanding Woman Award, and John M. Oakey, Jr., recipient of the Virginia State Bar's Lewis F. Powell Pro Bono Award

ney in the United States Attorney's office for the Eastern District of Virginia. In addition to maintaining a full time legal practice, Ms. Casey provides pro bono legal service through a wide variety of programs. Ms. Casey served as Chair of the Richmond Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee for 2003-2005. In that

tion counsel for homelessness for United Way, and as an instructor of English as a Second Language for immigrant and refugee services for the Diocese of Richmond.

Mr. Oakey received the Richmond Bar Associations' John C. Kenny Pro Bono Award in 2003. Ms. Casey received the John C. Kenny Pro Bono Award in 2005.

Volunteer Opportunities Through the Pro Bono Clearinghouse

The Pro Bono Clearinghouse, the signature program of the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation, was organized six years ago to meet a need in the Richmond area for an effective link between nonprofit organizations and legal talent who can provide counsel on a variety of issues facing nonprofit organizations.

Johnson Kanady of Kanady & Quinn, P.C. was among the first attorneys to sign up as a volunteer for the Pro Bono Clearinghouse and has found it to be an excellent source of rewarding pro bono oppor-

tunities. Johnson has assisted a number of nonprofits with issues involving real estate, tax and general business. He recently helped prepare a contract for purchase of real estate for Quin Rivers Agency, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide housing assistance to prevent homelessness.

A large part of Johnson's practice is representing nonprofit housing providers in developing affordable housing using federal low income housing tax credits, federal and state historic reha-

ilitation credits and financing provided by HUD, USDA/Rural Development, VHDA, DHCD and other agencies. He also represents many non profit organizations in all aspects of their activities, from formation and filing applications for exemption to addressing problems arising from potential conflicts of interest and intermediate sanctions.

To volunteer for the Pro Bono Clearinghouse, call (804)780-2600 or email cmurray@richmondbar.org.

Guardian Ad Litem needed in Richmond

Last year, the Metro Pro Bono Advocate published a request for volunteer attorneys to act as Guardians Ad Litem in the Richmond courts. Due to very limited response, there is still a need for additional attorney volunteers.

A few times per month, Richmond courts need the assistance of a GAL in civil cases where the defendant is incarcerated or has been deployed for military service. In these cases, the absentee defendant risks default judgment against him should he not respond to the Complaint or Bill of Particulars. In this situation, many judges prefer to appoint a GAL to protect the interests of, but not represent, the defendant. Many of these cases are landlord/tenant matters, where possession is an issue, or simple collection matters.

In collection cases requiring the appointment of a GAL, some judges are willing to set the matter off for 60 to 90 days so that a GAL may become acquainted with the case. During that time, the GAL can review the file, speak to the plaintiff's attorney, and contact the defendant via mail if necessary. If there are real defenses to be raised, a GAL can do so on behalf of the ward; if not, a GAL need only to report to the court that a judgment would be

appropriate. The same protocol is followed in landlord/tenant matters, except a fairly prompt personal contact might be required, especially if the defendant is incarcerated in a local jail. Oftentimes, though, it is clear that the defendant does not intend to use the premises again, or cannot pay for them, even if possession is not granted. Therefore, the most that the GAL would have to do is contact the family of the defendant and arrange to have his possessions removed.

Unfortunately, there is no mechanism in place to pay a GAL in these cases; therefore, any services provided by a GAL are wholly pro bono. Judges typically rely upon certified GALs who practice regularly in their courts to provide the needed pro bono assistance. The Richmond courts would welcome additional attorney volunteers. Very few of these cases reach trial; those that do last only a few minutes to an hour. Therefore, in exchange for a small effort on the part of the attorney, a great service could be provided to the community.

To learn more about becoming a pro bono GAL now, please contact the Hon. Robert Pustilnik at the Richmond General District Court at 804-646-6461.

Pro Bono Committee Members:

David N. Anthony, Chair
Hon. Joi J. Taylor
Hon. Robert A. Pustilnik
Margaret I. Bacigal
Marilynn Goss
W. Benjamin Pace
Maya M. Eckstein
James W. Speer
Marcellinus L. M. B. Slag
Charles K. Seyfarth
Mary W. Martelino
Christopher A. Jones
J. David Douthit
Sheryl L. Herndon
David F. Bernhardt
Scott C. Oostdyk
Stephen A. Northup
Douglas D. Callaway
Brian R. Marron

The Greater Richmond Bar Foundation, which acts as the charitable arm of the Richmond Bar Association and four other local bar associations, has recently published its 2006 Annual Report. Visit the Foundation website at www.grbf.org to download the publication. The Foundation will soon be contacting attorneys in the Richmond area asking for their support. Please consider helping them carry out their mission.

Lawyers contribute generously to CVLAS

by Henry W. McLaughlin III, Executive Director, Central Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc.

For the seventeenth year, the Richmond Bar Association this year requested that Richmond law firms contribute \$50.00 per lawyer to Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS). President Hugh Fain wrote a letter to managing partners of Richmond firms requesting such donations. In response, firms have already donated over \$27,000.00.

For the past several years, the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation (GRBF) and CVLAS conducted a separate fund raising drive for CVLAS seeking donations from individual lawyers. In 2006, these two drives together raised over \$90,000.00 for CVLAS. This year, the GRBF will do separate fund raising targeted for all of the law related work funded by the GRBF. As a result, the GRBF is not this year joining with CVLAS in the annual fund raising drive to individual lawyers seeking contributions for CVLAS. However, many members of the GRBF board of directors will assist in that fund raising drive in which volunteer lawyers make calls to individual lawyers during Law Week seeking contributions to CVLAS.

CVLAS depends on lawyer contributions from these two fund raising drives – from donations by law firms and donations by individual lawyers – to meet its annual budget. CVLAS has struggled financially in recent years and has had to reduce its lawyer staff in its Richmond office to three full-time lawyers and one lawyer on staff who is there one day a week. That small lawyer staff is supplemented by placement by Hunton and Williams of a pro bono fellow at the Richmond CVLAS office two-thirds of her time.

If you would be willing to join the lawyers making calls to lawyers seeking funding for CVLAS during May 1 through May 7, 2007, please call Henry McLaughlin, CVLAS executive director at (804) 200-6048.

A list of law firms and lawyers donating to CVLAS in 2007 will be published in the next edition of the Pro Bono Advocate.

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 Henry McLaughlin	643-1086 648-1012
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 Central VA Pro Bono Hotline	Coburn Beck, Agustin Rodriguez	788-8576, 274-5731
Pro Bono Clearinghouse (www.grbf.org)	Carol Murray	780-2600
Legal Information Network for Cancer (LINC)	Allison Held	371-9543
Virginia Poverty Law Center	Jay Speer	782-9430
Richmond Domestic Violence Project	Robbi Gray/Alexis Fishel	775-1227/771-5765
VBA-YLD Legal Services for the Mentally Ill	John Phelps	662-7242
VSJ Young Lawyers Board Match	Beth Hungate-Noland	783-6913
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**